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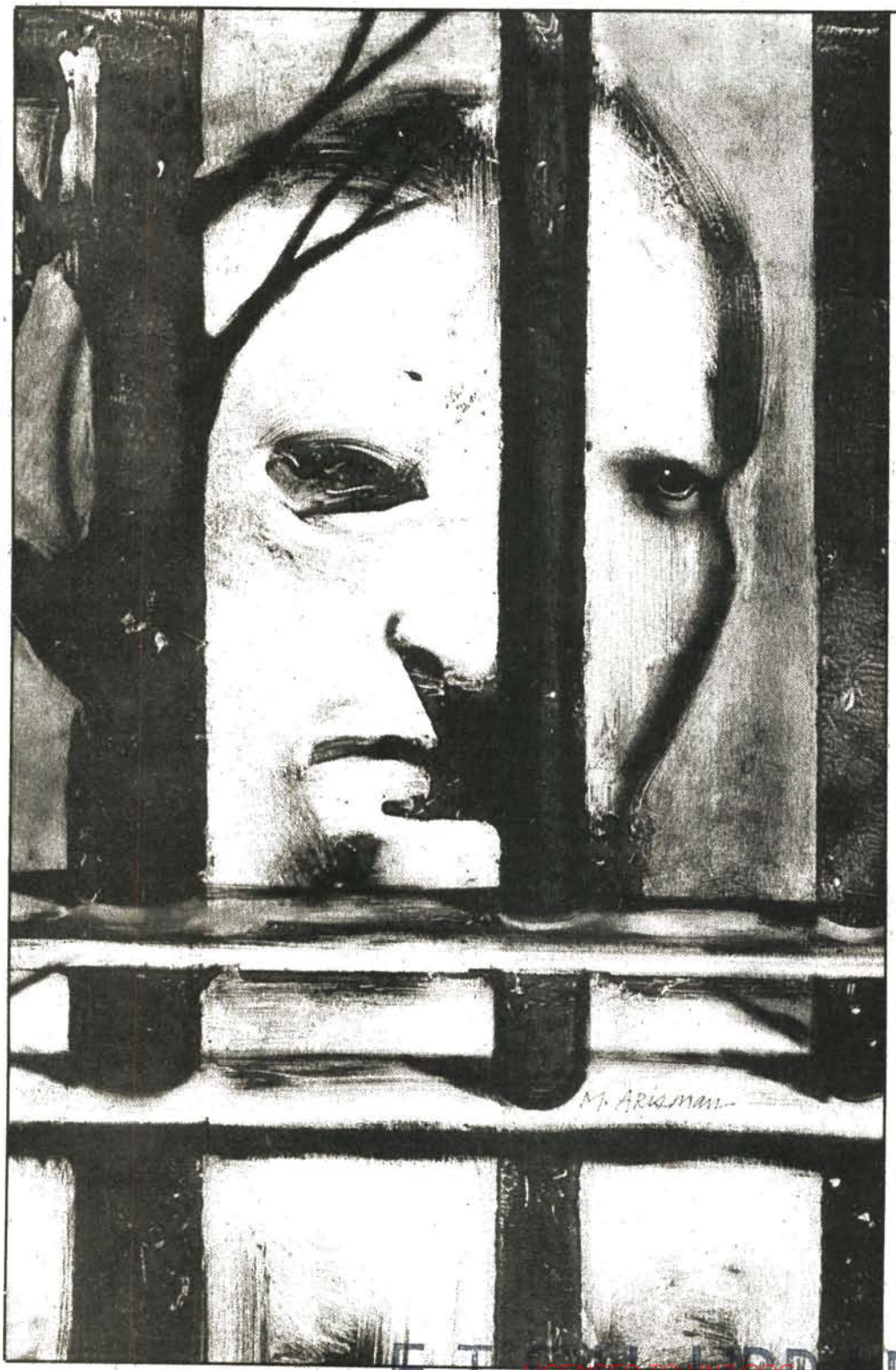

SPRING BOOKS

PRISONERS AND HEROES
Earl Shorris

Josephine Humphreys

Thomas M. Disch

Maureen Mullarkey

Terrence Rafferty

Stuart Klawans

Alexander Cockburn

Arthur C. Danto

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LETTERS.

BLINKERED DEFENSE

Hamden, Conn.

When Representative Robert Dornan, speaking from the floor of the House, called Vladimir Posner "this dirty, betraying little Jew," the flap, as far as I could tell, was limited to a short letter in *The New York Times* and a denunciation in *The Nation*. Now it appears that the editors of *Commentary* are inciting widespread condemnation of Gore Vidal's "The Empire Lovers Strike Back" [March 22]. Dornan is a defender of Israeli expropriation and "security measures" and thus seems to enjoy the indulgence of Jewish neoconservatives when he employs one of the most pernicious anti-Semitic slurs. Vidal, on the other hand, has no such protection, and in daring to remark on the relationship between Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter's American neoconservatism and their defense of Israeli policies, he has exposed himself to charges of racism.

Let me assure Podhoretz and Decter that in northwest Georgia, where I was raised, there are plenty of people driving around today with "Stand By Israel" stickers on the rear bumper and Ku Klux Klan flag license plates on the front. These people are just less tactful forms of the apocalyptic Bible thumpers and virulent anticommunists in whom the Podhoretzes believe they have found their most faithful allies. That neoconservative Jews have refused to confront the potentially dangerous irony may be, at best, simple intellectual flabbiness; the obverse of the situation, in the charges of anti-Semitism at the slightest examination of their strenuous, blinkered defense of Israeli policy, is much, much worse.

Vidal's article was not at all at the level that those of us who are his admirers have come to expect. Perhaps he deserved to be reproved in the snide and carping tone that he himself adopted. In no way, however, did the article warrant the accusations of racism that are appearing in *The Nation*. The most tragic thing in all of this is that very soon the neoconservatives will once again settle down to the business of ignoring or suppressing the voices of those Zionists who seek equity and peace with the Palestinian Arabs.

Jorge Luis Espinoza

VIDAL'S WARS

Mendocino, Calif.

Gore Vidal's attack on rabid Zionism, as exemplified by Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary* (a publication supported by the American Jewish Committee), was so apposite that I am not surprised it has elicited a barrage of mail attacking Vidal for being anti-Semitic. My own letter is prompted by a sample of such duplicitous scurrility: Geoffrey Stokes's *Village Voice* column of April 8, headlined "Jew-Roasting." Vidal was attacked for his derogation of Podhoretz's indifference toward the Civil War; the latter was quoted as saying: "Well, to me, the Civil War is as remote and as irrelevant as the War of the Roses."

Well, to me and to most Americans, including millions of American Jews, the Civil War is in many ways analogous to World War II. Had Hitler won, I think Podhoretz would agree, a certain vision of the world would have been destroyed, perhaps forever. A corresponding judgment can be made for the Civil War. And if the racist policies of Israel's Shimon Peres continue to be endorsed by the United States, it is not unlikely that we will find ourselves in World War III. At that point none of us will have to worry about the relevance of the Civil War or the War of the Roses.

To me, the essence of Vidal's article is his concern that we are being whipped into a frenzy, "into spending enormous sums for 'defense,' which also means the support of Israel in its never-ending wars against just about everyone."

Russel Norvell

INACCURACY IN ACADEMIA

New Haven, Conn.

Jon Wiener alleges that I have "worked with" Accuracy in Academia ["Reed Irvine Rides the Paper Tiger," April 5]. My sole contact with what turns out to have been an agent of that organization occurred when I received a telephone call earlier this year from a man who identified himself only as Matthew Scully, a staff writer for a Washington publication, *Campus Report*. Having never heard of that publication, I had no reason to connect it with A.I.A. So I answered some questions about the David Abraham affair, just as I have for writers from numerous other publications. When it became evident that Scully was not acquainted with much of what had already appeared in print, I cut the call short by offering to send him (at an address that contained no mention of A.I.A.) copies of articles from *The New York Times*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Nation*, *Pravda* and other publications. Only when I much later saw a copy of the article in *Campus Report* did I realize that it was an organ of A.I.A. and that I had been the unwitting victim of a ruse. Wiener also writes of "the American Historical Association's resolution condemning A.I.A. . . . as a 'threat to academic freedom.'" I assume that he is referring to an endorsement by the Council of the A.H.A., at its meeting of December 27, 1985, of a statement by the American Association of University Professors that voiced concern about "a current threat to academic freedom that arises from a new organization called 'Accuracy in Academia'" and expressed opposition to its activities. I am a member of both the A.H.A. and the A.A.U.P. and strongly support the position of both on A.I.A.

Henry A. Turner

WIENER REPLIES

New York City

Henry A. Turner gave A.I.A. an interview and sent the organization a pile of clippings and unpublished correspondence. I quoted Richard Kirkendall of the American Historical Association describing this as "cooperating with" A.I.A. If it's not cooperating, what is it? Turner protests that his cooperation was unwitting. As I indicated in the story, he did not return my calls asking for his side of the story. There's a lesson here.

Jon Wiener

SOUTHERN 'ARISTOS'

Oakland, Calif.

Wendy Gimbel's review of Virginia Foster Durr's fascinating autobiography, *Outside the Magic Circle* ["Pride of Place," March 29], starts with an excellent description of Virginia's development from a proper little white Southern girl to a passionate advocate of black liberation. But I thought her perception of Durr's "inherited desire to be a Southern aristocrat" was all wrong.

I had the great good fortune to be a member of the Durr household for two and a half years during the war, and I remember nothing of the kind. For me, fresh from England, life with the Durrs was a marvelous introduction to contemporary American history and thought. As general counsel of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, Clifford Durr was in constant battle with the monopolies. As chair of the Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax, Virginia worked unceasingly to enlist the support of representatives and senators. There was a constant flow of visitors to their home, representing every shade of progressive thought: New Dealers, trade union organizers, Communists. I don't recall meeting a single "Southern aristocrat," nor do I remember any yearning on Virginia's part to return to that life. By the time I met her, she had come to despise the whole premise of those alleged "aristos."

Conversation at the Durrs' house dwelt on the burning issues of the day. I was the lucky fly on the wall, afforded a rare opportunity for an unforgettable education, which served me well in my future life. To get the full flavor of those days, one should read *Outside the Magic Circle*—a *sui generis* rendition of what really went on.

Jessica Mitford

The Nation welcomes letters—typed, double spaced and no longer than 300 words, please. Letters may be edited for reasons of space.

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CONTENTS.

Volume 242, Number 18

LETTERS
634

EDITORIALS
635 After Chernobyl
636 Letter to America — *E.P. Thompson*

COLUMNS
638 Beat the Devil — *Alexander Cockburn*
640 Capitol Letter — *Kai Bird and Max Holland*

BOOKS & THE ARTS
641 Valladares: Against All Hope
Cabezas: Fire From the Mountain — *Earl Shorris*
644 To a Young Novitiate (poem) — *Sherod Santos*
648 Miller: The Good Mother — *Josephine Humphreys*
650 The Road to Heaven: Science Fiction and the Militarization of Space — *Thomas M. Disch*
656 Let Them Eat Attitude — *Maureen Mullarkey*
660 Waking to the Rain (poem) — *W.S. Merwin*
664 Eisenberg: Transactions In a Foreign Currency — *Terrence Rafferty*
666 Eco: Travels in Hyperreality: Essays — *Stuart Klawans*
670 Rosenthal: The Character Factory: Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts and the Imperatives of Empire — *Alexander Cockburn*
673 Art — *Arthur C. Danto*

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EDITORIALS.

After Chernobyl

The political fallout from the Chernobyl disaster will be detectable long after the radioactive particles dissipate in the upper atmosphere. Lines of argument were drawn within minutes of the first Soviet announcement last Monday. In the United States, antinuclear activists and anti-Soviet polemicists immediately began battling on the air and in the press over the lessons of the awful accident: for some it showed the danger inherent in the production of nuclear power; for others it proved the cavalier incompetence of the Soviet system. The nuclear industry and the weapons establishment offered unconvincing assurances that an accident of such magnitude could never happen here, not with those famous containment structures, foolproof safety devices and old-fashioned American know-how. At such moments, memories are apt to be short.

From the dawn of the atomic age, there has been a tacit agreement among the world's great nuclear powers not to bother one another with bad news. Western policy-makers seemed to be in cognitive collusion with Soviet authorities to keep the 1957 accident at the Kyshtym radioactive waste dump in a memory hole, until journalists pried it loose nearly twenty years later. The dissident Soviet scientist Zhores Medvedev even traveled to the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory in Livermore, California, to convince his American counterparts of the seriousness of the Kyshtym

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disaster, but they refused to give credence to his reports. For many years, the West found it convenient to believe in the infallibility of Soviet science and the reliability of nuclear technology. Only after Three Mile Island and the growth of a worldwide antinuke movement did the nuclear establishment speak openly of the serious accidents that had occurred and discuss the narrowly averted disasters in Browns Ferry, Alabama, in 1975, and Detroit in 1966.

The British were no less obdurate. They kept secret the seriousness of the accident at the Windscale plutonium production reactor, north of Liverpool, a prototype for the Chernobyl facility, for twenty-five years after it occurred, in October 1957. Now U.S. intelligence sources say, the sequence of events leading to the Chernobyl accident began three days before Moscow radio's first announcement. Is it possible that Western monitors knew about the danger but their governments kept quiet to maintain their commitment to secrecy?

The Chernobyl accident is, by early accounts, the worst to date, and it is very bad news for the Russians, who handled it poorly from the start. But it is also bad news for the scores of other countries where reactors are already working or under construction or planned. Whatever the weather patterns, we are all downwind from Chernobyl. National boundaries afford no defense against radiation; social systems allow accidents to occur with comparable severity, each according to its peculiar bureaucratic configuration. In the Soviet Union, cost-cutting commissars under pressure to meet energy-production quotas probably sacrificed safety in their haste. In this country, profit-pushing managers of huge corporations have cut their own corners and covered up their mistakes. T.M.I.'s Metropolitan Edison and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission were as reluctant to face up to the disaster under their noses in 1979 as the Soviet authorities were last week.

The proliferation of nuclear installations is a technological epidemic out of control. Eight major accidents have been reported in the United States, three in the Soviet Union and others in Canada, Britain, Switzerland, France, Japan and Argentina. Minor incidents, which luckily cause no loss of life, little or no release of radiation, or insignificant equipment damage, happen every week. Those events are rarely covered beyond the hometown papers, but each one must be figured in the ominous odds of probability that decree that another Three Mile Island or Chernobyl will some day explode.

There are any number of sequences that could lead to a great release of radiation at a nuclear facility, and there is no reason to assume that the Russians or the Cubans, or the Mexicans or the Canadians, are sloppier than U.S. technicians. Each reactor has its peculiar potential for accident. The Chernobyl plant has a design that is quite different from that of most U.S. models, and of the newer Soviet ones, but it is similar to many others throughout the world. It also resembles the dual-purpose plant in Hanford, Washington, which produces plutonium for weapons and electrical energy; both have graphite as a moderating medium. The British also use graphite. But no system is immune to human error and material failure.

The politics of nuclear power will surely produce attempts to stop the spread of new plants and perhaps curb the proliferation of weapons as well. Already Sweden plans to phase out its nuclear industry by the early twenty-first century. In 1978 Austrians voted to bar a completed facility from going on line. Only citizen-based environmental action movements have challenged the containment structure of secrecy that the nuclear establishments, both East and West, built to shield their work from the beginning. Activist groups in several American states are fighting the construction or operation of nuclear plants, including the Shoreham station in New York and Seabrook in New Hampshire. Depressed oil prices and exorbitant construction costs are taking their toll. Antinuclear activists always said that it would take a major accident to convince the world that atomic power is unsafe in any form. At Chernobyl we may have witnessed the dawn of the postnuclear age.

Letter to America

Dear Americans,

Let me explain to you why I am, just now, what you call anti-American. I have difficulty in being this, since I am half-American myself. On my mother's side I can trace my American ancestry, along five or six lines, back 300 years. I have spent pleasant days hunting out burial stones of ancestors in Rhode Island fields.

My great-great-grandfather, Judge William Jessup, nominated Abraham Lincoln at the Republican National Convention in Chicago and chaired the committee that drew up his campaign platform. His son, Henry Jessup, was one of the founders of the American University in Lebanon, where my mother was born and grew up.

If you were to read Henry's *Fifty-Three Years in Syria*, you would find that in those days there were Americans who did not regard the Islamic world as being made up of "wogs" or "gooks" or as targets for bombardment. (In 1984 the battleship New Jersey lobbed half-ton shells on the hills around Zahle, where my mother spent her childhood.) You would also find that the troubles of the Middle East did not start yesterday. They were there before the state of Israel existed. In the tormented human macédoine of Lebanon, Druse and Maronites—Moslem and Christian sects—warred with each other 150 years ago.

The British and the French in those days sought to reform the manners of the people with indiscriminate acts of retaliation. In 1840 the British had the brilliant idea of bombarding Beirut. That merely led to the ferocious retribution the Druse visited upon Christian villages in the massacres of 1860. Because the British gave this example of "diplomacy," I suppose my British half should congratulate you on following our example. It is the American half of me that rises up in outrage.

What has come over you? What has caused this strange national self-exaltation, this isolationism of the heart,

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these intrusions upon others' territories and cultures, these Rambo reflexes?

Terrorism is a word for things so terrible that it dulls the brain like alcohol. How can a nation that preens itself on its sensitivity to racism in its domestic arrangements behave with brutal racist indifference toward Libya?

The harboring of terrorists is certainly a foul offense. Each year huge sums are collected in the United States to buy arms for the Provisional Irish Republican Army. At the St. Patrick's Day parades in New York City, graced by mayors and political dignitaries, the collectors are out, and no doubt my liberal friends have contributed, with no notion of the anguish their money brings to sectarian-strife-tormented Northern Ireland. American money may have been used to buy Libyan arms that were used for I.R.A. terrorism in Ireland or England. In Britain today it is being asked widely whether this now entitles us to get out our aging Vulcan bombers and strike New York.

Terrorism is infinitely recessive, like Chinese boxes. Where do we start? With the British bombarding Beirut? With the Druse massacres of Christians? With Menachem Begin's Irgun blowing up the King David Hotel full of Brits? With Israeli bombing strikes on Lebanon? With C.I.A.-backed adventures, first to back that good anti-Communist Qaddafi and then to plot to assassinate him when he turned out to be less pliant? With the drowning by American gunfire of Libyan sailors in the Gulf of Sidra last month? With the Berlin disco? Or with the state terrorism—and assassination attempt—your F-111s inflicted on Tripoli?

What Druse massacre of the future is now being meditated in darkening hearts throughout the Islamic world? Is it true, as we have been told in Britain, that not one voice was heard in Congress explicitly condemning the terror bombing of the sleeping city of Tripoli? Are the compassionate and internationally minded Americans I used to know dead? Do their descendants not care?

If my American half feels outrage against my motherland, my British (or European) half regards my fatherland with shame. Those F-111s were launched from the English countryside. You have been told that, while other Europeans are wimps, Prime Minister Thatcher is a heroine who "walks tall." I can assure you that she is no heroine to her own people. She is seen as the betrayer of our national integrity and our national honor. Our land has been used to harbor your state terrorism, in exactly the same way as the Libyans are accused of harboring Palestinian agents.

Two-thirds of our people feel revulsion and shame, not fear. To be sure, there is an understandable dislike for the immediate consequences of the Tripoli raid. At a time when the Archbishop of Canterbury's representative, Terry Waite, has been patiently negotiating the release of American hostages in Lebanon, at the risk of his own life, your actions have caused the murder of British hostages and turmoil at European airports and other sensitive points—which are nearer to the Islamic world than your own.

We understand that Americans, having done their worst to screw up our world, will now abstain from taking their holidays in Europe for fear that they might get hurt. But we are slow to learn our right place and have not yet concurred in your low valuation of European life.

There are also—if I may impose on your patience a little longer—some small political objections. Many Europeans don't like U.S. policies in Central America, yet if we criticize them we are told that it is your backyard.

But the Mediterranean is more than Europe's backyard. It is part of Europe. It is the cradle of European civilization, and even on its southern shore there are ancient half-European cities, a European diaspora. It is not your sea, and we don't know what you are doing there. Do you? By what right do you blunder and bomb and bombard its shores? Don't pretend that something called NATO asked you to do this. It did not. It was not consulted. The NATO allies most closely concerned with that sensitive zone—Spain, Italy and Greece—are appalled.

If you decide to fund and arm terrorists in Nicaragua, we can do little about it. But if you start bombing around the fringes of Europe, without any agreement with your allies, then NATO is nothing but a hole with an American gun pointing through it.

That is why both halves of me, the American and the British, unite in what you misrecognize as anti-Americanism. I do not find the demand for "an eye for an eye" (or ninety-seven pairs of Libyan eyes for one pair of American) in Lincoln's platform that my great-great-grandfather helped draw up. In the name of that cousinship—those generations of Jessups, Blisses, Dodges and Leavitts who devoted their lives to the complex work of understanding between the American and Arab worlds—I feel only disgust for America's public face today.

It is because I value American traditions that I am now opposed to the American state, to the cowardly bombast of its reigning politicians, to the evil that its racist aggression is reproducing and the dangers into which it is leading the whole world. I am not opposed to Americans. I think it is tragic that the majority has lost its way in the know-nothing ideological dark.

People are asking, up and down Europe, whether this or that nation ought to leave NATO. I see a cleaner and simpler solution. Let the European NATO allies and Canada, with courtesy and thanks, invite the United States to leave NATO. If it will not leave, then let them expel it. They can then attend to their own security needs in what way best suits them and engage in their own negotiations for mutual disarmament with the Soviet bloc.

We shall certainly feel safer when your F-111s, Tridents and Poseidons, carrier battle groups and rapid deployment forces have gone home. You will probably feel safer also, and suffer from fewer rushes of blood to the head. You might even find it safe to take your holidays in the Mediterranean again. Where all of you, except for President Rambo, will be heartily welcome. E.P. THOMPSON

E.P. Thompson, a British historian and writer, is an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a founder of European Nuclear Disarmament.

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Silence Is Golden

The great thing about a Free Press is that it can suppress significant national news without being accused, unless by fringe elements of no consequence, of exercising political censorship. It's a point lost on the Russians but borne in on me every time I take a trip anywhere in the United States. The success of the Reagan Administration so far as news management is concerned—news management being its central preoccupation—is its conditioning of the media to "see" and not to see. To "see" terrorism, but not to see the Administration as promoter of terror; to "see" a Reagan economic boom, but not to see the five flat quarters since the fall of 1984 that spell economic failure; to "see" a conservative younger generation, but not to see the omens and realities of new insurgency.

Every campus I go to has its saga of demonstrations, arrests, impressive political activism, either entirely ignored or shrunk to a footnote in the national media. When I visited Yale University in late April, I found that 322 people had been arrested over the previous two weeks in actions for divestment. At least a hundred of those arrested were from the Yale nonacademic community, including members of the clerical and technical unions. Since both town and gown pwoggies want Yale, a major landowner in a poor city, to pay property taxes, they symbolically assessed their shantytown and paid $18.90 to the New Haven treasury. Yale has invoked disciplinary action against about a hundred students, who now face possible suspension.

Moving from Yale to Ann Arbor, I found an even more active student and faculty component at the University of Michigan. A few days earlier 118 people, mostly students, had been arrested for sitting in at the offices of Representative Carl Pursell, a Reagan-lover. Back in New York City, Brooklynites Against Apartheid gave me an account of an action at Kennedy Airport, their third, that received virtually no coverage by the U.S. press, though the South African press described it in some detail. On April 12, B.A.A. members constructed three shanties at the South African Airways gate in the British Airways terminal, blocking anyone from boarding the plane. Amid other actions by the thirty-five people in the group—such as pouring motor oil over the baggage counters and desks—the police arrived and arrested six, handling them roughly. The six will stand trial on May 9, on charges ranging from reckless endangerment to trespass, resisting arrest, disorderly conduct and unlawful assembly.

A week earlier, six people, including three students, at Columbia University Law School were arrested during a demonstration against Abraham Sofaer, the State Department's legal adviser. Some thirty students were protesting Sofaer's presence as sole speaker in a "symposium" on Terrorism and the Law. Sofaer has argued for the legality of funding the *contras* even if Congress votes down the $100 million, and has defended Israel's bombing of Tunis and invasion of Lebanon and the legality of the U.S. bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi.

These are just samples of an activism that stretches from coast to coast, from the university administration buildings at Yale to the canneries in Watsonville, California, an activism that the press scants amid talk of campus conservatism, as it hails the great communicator and his mesmeric hold over the people.

The Passing Show

§ In crises, so far as opinion forming is concerned, it's the first forty-eight hours that count. *The New York Times*'s editorial supporting the U.S. bombing of Libya was followed by Anthony Lewis's disgraceful column a day later, evoking T'Wicker's rally to the support of the Grenadian invasion. Richard Cohen, house liberal at *The Washington Post*, also endorsed the raid on Libya. Almost all of the liberals did. You could hear some of them, later still, mumbling that they weren't quite sure what came over them, but by then it was too late.

§ "A local [Honduran] schoolteacher reported finding evidence that boys in her class had been sexually molested by [U.S.] soldiers, and several children were found to have V.D. The story was quickly broadcast in Managua, Cuba and European countries critical of the U.S. military presence here" (*The Boston Globe*, April 15). Note the familiar innuendo: the fact that these countries reported the story somehow invalidates its substance. The same story mentioned Honduran allegations of U.S. chemical warfare tests, as did a United Press International story on February 26, which contained this memorable denial by a U.S. official: "It is totally false that the U.S. is spraying chemicals in the northern zone of Honduras, just as it is false that the U.S. sprayed chemicals in Vietnam." So much for the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam, the largest application of chemical warfare in history.

§ Waldheimer's disease: you get old and forget you were a Nazi.

§ Few members of Congress are as effective as Charles Wilson of Texas in getting funding for the Afghan guerrillas. He also likes to visit the area—six times in the past seven years, most recently with his present companion, Annelise Ilschenko, a former Miss World U.S.A. On that trip he was also accompanied by Kathy Kiely of *The Houston Post*, who recorded Wilson's pathological chatter. "I want to do everything possible to kill Russians," he told Kiely, "as painfully as possible," adding that he found war to be "exciting and fun." Later he said, "I want 'em bad wounded, you understand? Like blind," and disclosed that he had personally asked President Reagan to supply the Afghan guerrillas with "more painful bullets." Announcing that he believed in an eye for an eye, he asked a member of his entourage, "You want a Russian ear to bring back?"

§ Time Inc.'s HBO is backing another slice of terrorporn, *Vengeance*, for $9.5 million in Israel, about the head of a secret Israeli antiterrorist team. The scriptwriters may care to study the raid by Israeli jets on Palestinian refugee camps outside Sidon on March 27, which killed ten people and wounded twenty-two. The attack, according to the Associ-

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ated Press, came shortly after a rocket exploded in a northern Israeli schoolyard, injuring five people. Israel's northern commander, Maj. Gen. Ori Orr, said on Israeli army radio that the army had not determined whether the rocket was fired by Shiite or Palestinian guerrillas.

§ Readers beseech me to attack the dreadful Cyrus Bass ads in *The Nation*. Fear not. The torrent of drivel from this Chicago ophthalmologist, for which he has already disbursed nearly $20,000, has almost dried up. Hang on.

The Labors of Leiken

I'd been waiting with some curiosity to see how Robert Leiken and *The New York Review of Books* would cope with compelling evidence that Leiken mangles the truth and that its own editors are loath to publish letters pointing this out. Readers may recall that in *The Nation* for March 15, I carried a letter from Marvin Corrales, which had been sent to *The New York Review* on January 6 but had still not been published. Corrales, formerly coordinating secretary and now leader of the youth section of Nicaragua's Democratic Conservative Party, dealt at some length with Leiken's assertion in a *New York Review* article that "young Sandinistas" had been responsible for breaking up a Conservative Party meeting on October 28, 1984, just before the November 4 elections. To the contrary, wrote Corrales, he had organized the demonstration by the party's youth section, after it was discovered that a U.S. Embassy official had offered bribes to four Conservative leaders to persuade their party to withdraw from the elections. The youth section burst into a Conservative Party convention, urging the opposite course.

Now, after four months, *The New York Review* has finally published Corrales's letter, having given Leiken a protracted period of time to concoct a characteristically deceitful defense. In his reply to Corrales in the May 8 issue, Leiken recruits one Enrique Sotelo Borgen to claim that Corrales is a Sandinista security agent, that he was such at the time of the demonstration and that Borgen can speak with authority on this matter because he was national coordinator of the Conservative Party until two months after the elections. Thus, in a fashion that must bring a smile of delight to William Casey and the *contra* leaders, *The New York Review* sponsors the proposition that a person urging participation in the Nicaraguan elections was a Sandinista provocateur.

The magazine's editors would have been better advised to do their own checking. Who is Borgen? Leiken tactfully omits to mention that Borgen was one of four Conservative leaders identified as having been approached by the man from the U.S. Embassy and one of three who failed to report the bribe offer. Borgen was forthwith accused of being a traitor to his party, forced to resign and, as one of the leaders of a splinter faction, is now reduced to the rather comical expedient of having to emend his record through a once and perhaps future Maoist in the pages of *The New York Review*.

Borgen claims, in the statement organized by Leiken, that there is no evidence he was offered a bribe. Such protestations may sound good in New York but were not persuasive to Conservative Party treasurer Gustavo Mendoza, who was in the room when the offer was made and, though the three others present did not report the approach ($300,000 to the party; $50,000 to each man), informed his party. Amid many other distortions Borgen also fails to explain how, having been forced into public resignation from the Conservative Party on October 29, he could have been national coordinator two months later.

Borgen and Leiken share an addiction to calumny. Borgen claims that the demonstration at the Conservative convention was organized by "a former member of the Somocista security office," César Augusto Castillo, now a deputy in the National Assembly. To such charges Castillo says that although he is no friend of the Sandinistas, he would be happy to have Lenin Cerna, director of public security, go through his agency's files on Somocistas and put Borgen's accusations to the test.

The contrast is striking. Leiken's man Borgen was forced to leave the Conservative Party and now holds no position in it, while the man he accuses of being a Sandinista agent (and of having been dismissed from the party for that reason) was, in February 1985, elected to the post of national coordinator of the Conservative Party's youth section and, at the same meeting, delegated to attend an international conference in Spain. This mission—much to his disgust—he was unable to accomplish because the Sandinistas said he was of draft age and refused to give him a passport. Are Leiken, Borgen and the editors of the *The New York Review* suggesting that the Conservative Party youth section is made up entirely of Sandinista infiltrators? It would seem so, since Corrales was elected to his position by a majority of the Conservative youth, all of them apparently happy to promote a man who, if we are to believe Borgen, was known to be a spy. This is absurd.

I'm sorry to submit readers to this intricate saga, because it would be more fun to write about the mating habits of the pink-footed booby. But Leiken is now being promoted as an expert by such guardians of political morals as Martin Peretz, Robert Silvers and Henry Grunwald, and consequently should be exposed for the monumental fraud-monger that he is. Incidentally, in his letter to *The New York Review*, Leiken takes a swipe at Tony Jenkins, Managua-based correspondent for *The Guardian* of London, perhaps out of understandable resentment that Jenkins demonstrated the innacuracy of Leiken's account of the events surrounding Arturo Cruz's August 5, 1984, visit to Chinandega. Leiken writes that the bribe attempt by the U.S. official was reported in *The Guardian* by Jenkins, who he insinuates is biased in favor of the Sandinistas. The inference is thus that Jenkins concocted the bribe story. Unfortunately for Leiken, the report of the bribe attempt was written by Jonathan Steele, *The Guardian*'s senior foreign correspondent.

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CAPITOL LETTER.

KAI BIRD AND MAX HOLLAND

■ Star Wars Fiction

Department of Energy Secretary John Herrington didn't exactly lie to a Congressional panel, but he came close to it. Herrington was trying to explain why the Strategic Defense Initiative, which President Reagan routinely refers to as "nonnuclear," requires increased funding for nuclear testing. Testifying before Representative Edward Markey's Subcommittee on Energy Conservation and Power on February 26, he said that $603 million requested in fiscal 1987 for testing nuclear-powered laser weapons was needed "to understand the Soviet capability to design and deploy similar weapons."

A memorandum to Markey prepared by his staff calls Herrington's presentation "fundamentally misleading." Under Reagan's allegedly nonnuclear Star Wars program, between now and 1991 the United States could spend $4.5 billion on research and testing of X-ray lasers and orbiting space reactors. This year Reagan has requested $634 million for underground nuclear testing, largely designed to develop X-ray lasers.

Herrington also said, "We suspect that the Soviets may be well ahead of the U.S. in nuclear directed-energy weapons." That so-called suspicion is refuted by Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger's 1987 "Report to the Congress," which finds the Soviet Union superior in none of the twenty basic technology areas, including several related to a Star Wars–type system.

Herrington also contradicted the testimony of other Administration witnesses concerning the potential effects of a comprehensive test ban treaty. He said a test ban might still enable the Russians to deploy nuclear lasers. But as Roy Woodruff, associate director for defense systems at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, told Congress last year, "Certainly the scientifically significant breakthroughs in new weapon concepts, such as the X-ray laser or any nuclear directed-energy weapon, would be stopped in the absence of testing."

Finally, Herrington told the subcommittee that Soviet nuclear weapons tests could not be detected until "more reliable means to verify test ban compliance become available." That too is untrue. As Raymond Garthoff, a retired Foreign Service officer, says, the Russians agreed in 1978 to place ten permanent seismic stations near their test sites. They also accepted in principle the right of each party to send inspection teams to investigate suspicious explosions. Although the British raised an obstacle when they refused to have ten seismic stations on their soil, it was ultimately the United States that backed out of the agreement—after it had been "95 percent negotiated," according to arms control negotiator Paul Warnke.

■ Fauntroy Fronts for the Pentagon

It is not often that the Congressional Black Caucus has a chance to make foreign policy, but since the fall of Baby Doc Duvalier, Representative Walter Fauntroy has been guiding U.S. legislation on Haiti. To the discomfort of many in the Black Caucus, Fauntroy seems to have been a front for the Pentagon and for Haiti's National Governing Council (C.N.G.), led by Gen. Henri Namphy.

Fauntroy tacked on $4 million in "nonlethal" military aid to a proposal for $21.7 million in economic assistance to Haiti. Until last week, when Fauntroy had a change of heart, liberals in favor of food aid but opposed to military aid thought they would have to vote the entire package up or down.

Early in April, Fauntroy led a delegation of representatives to Haiti and held two meetings with General Namphy. At the first meeting the general didn't mention military assistance, but at the second, Fauntroy and his colleagues asked him if he didn't need some. Namphy replied that he could use some trucks. Before departing Port-au-Prince, Fauntroy held a press conference at which he urged Haitians to "give the C.N.G. a chance." In a speech that many Haitians found patronizing, he said, "How blessed you are in Haiti to have at the helm in the interim government Gen. Henri Namphy. In him, God has blessed us with the ideal midwife in the birth of a new Haiti." He then admonished Haitians to give up their "bad habits," among them "demanding too much too soon in terms of wage increases."

Fauntroy's delegation told their Congressional colleagues that the nonlethal military assistance was needed in rural areas to root out members of the dreaded Tontons Macoutes. Fauntroy's amendment requires the C.N.G. to provide written assurances that the army would not be used "to suppress legitimate protests," and calls on Namphy to purge army officers responsible for human rights abuses.

But as one Black Caucus staff member said, "These kinds of assurances can't be counted on in a situation so much in flux." Namphy's government is precarious at a time of mounting protests against the C.N.G. While the State Department blames leftist groups for the unrest, Fauntroy's aide, Steve Horblitt, who used to work for the C.I.A., says Duvalier money has been buying the mobs, and that the military assistance is necessary to restore order. "You can't do it with cotton balls," he told us.

When liberals began to question the military package, Bob Boyer, an aide to Representative Dante B. Fascell, told members of the Black Caucus that the proposal had the support of Haiti's Bishop, François Gayot. That was not true, as Boyer knew. The Bishop had met with Fauntroy specifically to object even to nonlethal military assistance. An aide to the Bishop confirms that Gayot still opposes it.

An April 7 memorandum from Boyer to Fascell shows that the idea for military assistance originated with Gen. Fred Gorden, Inter-American Regional Director at the Pentagon. Shortly before we went to press, Haitian troops killed seven mourners at a memorial service for victims of the Duvalier era, and Fauntroy felt compelled to withdraw the military aid proposal. Don't bet on that being the end of it, though. As a Congressional aide put it, "The army is the only game in town." The Administration may try to bypass Congress by reprogramming Pentagon funds directly to the Haitian Army.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

To Be a Hero in Our Time It Is Necessary to Write a Book

EARL SHORRIS

AGAINST ALL HOPE. *By Armando Valladares. Translated by Andrew Hurley. Alfred A. Knopf. 381 pp. $18.95.*

FIRE FROM THE MOUNTAIN. *By Omar Cabezas. Translated by Kathleen Weaver. Foreword by Carlos Fuentes. Afterword by Walter LaFeber. Crown. 233 pp. $13.95.*

In 1974, Omar Cabezas, who had been a member of the Sandinista Front for nearly six years, went to the mountains to become a guerrilla; and Armando Valladares, who had been a political prisoner in Cuba for nearly fifteen years, smuggled out his first letter to Amnesty International.

Each man has since written a book in celebration of himself. One of them is lying.

Autobiography can never be as disinterested as dreams. Both of them are lying.

Now, we can begin to think about the books, but before we come to any conclusions we should remind ourselves that neither you nor I, according to one of the world's foremost experts on prisons and politics, will know what we're talking about. Ivan Denisovich, who had just been told by a medical assistant in the gulag that his fever was not high enough to spare him from even one day of work outdoors in the Siberian winter, said, "How can you expect a man who's warm to understand a man who's cold?"

The bourgeois life is a temperate life, intolerable only in the abstract, nauseating only to philosophers. In Cuban prisons and Nicaraguan jungles men learn to eat insects and suffer leprous sores; they do not retch at the feel of shit. To be a hero in a middle-class world is a difficult business, as Danny the Red advised when he said of Sartre, "Won't he ever stop talking?" Poor Sartre, the police would not arrest him, they would not send him to prison; he was destined to die warm in a cold world, talking until the end. We read.

I do not know exactly when prisoners first became heroes—Prometheus, Odysseus, Moses. Nor is it certain when hero worship and revolution first became entwined. Freud said the connection has to do with a longing for the father, "for the same father whom the hero of legend boasts of having overthrown." Carlyle thought hero worship a basic part of human nature; he called it "the fixed point in modern revolutionary history."

In reading Carlyle, one begins to discern something about heroes that Freud neglected to tell us: there is a distinction between heroes and legends. Legends are third-person characters, while heroes speak to us directly. Che is a hero; Sandino is a legend. We know what Che said; we know only what Sandino did. To be a hero in our time it is necessary to write a book. Autobiography therefore abounds. And to hell with literature, the purpose of an autobiography is to prove that the writer is a hero.

For some autobiographers, heroism may be but a dream: Richard Nixon, Priscilla Presley, William Buckley. A hero is not a person who has learned to live with a bad odor; a hero must be, as Freud said, one who overthrows; a hero does not adjust; for a conservative to be a hero is impossible. Yet there is in Freud's view of hero worship, in *Moses and Monotheism*, that notion of longing for the father who was overthrown, that circling, the future that Armando Valladares predicts for the land of Omar Cabezas. If the two books constitute a succession, they pose a question about revolution in the Americas, perhaps about the very nature of revolution.

Two men who think of themselves as heroes, creatures as gigantic as metaphors, do battle for the allegiance of the reader. One speaks from the left, the other from a politics defined only as against the left. One has taken power, the other has been lucky to escape with his life. One writes with a novelist's talent for evocation, the other has made a mess and called it a book. Both men speak from the heights of the hero, for they have been prisoners who did not adjust, who overturned the conditions of their lives. They have been prisoners of different kinds, but they have been real prisoners. The conditions of their imprisonment were imposed from without; they are not fictionists whose prisons may be literal or dreamed or self-imposed. Armando Valladares spent twenty-two years in Cuban jails; Omar Cabezas lived in Nicaragua under Somoza, he went underground and then he went to the mountains.

The autobiography of Omar Cabezas covers a brief period; it tells only how he became a guerrilla, nothing before, nothing after. It is a book about how the kid known as Skinny got the face of a guerrilla:

> There's a tiny insect that harasses you all day, then at night it slips through the weave of your hammock or blanket and keeps right on biting you when you're lying down. It's a nightmare; it's horrible; you can't sleep in peace.
>
> That's why your face becomes lined in the mountains—your expression is always pained. When you take a shit you wet your ass on the icy brush; the food's awful—there's nothing appealing, no sugar; you hardly ever smile; every few minutes you get scratched; you're always burdened down, always wet. So your face is constantly expressing pain. And as days pass, and weeks, and months, and years, your face becomes set in that expression, the muscles clenched; your face hardens into a grimace, as if your muscles could not relax into their normal state; your face has changed.
>
> Over the years the faces of the guerrillas change, and that change reveals the new tempering. The changed face tells you that you are not the same.

For Cabezas, who came from the prison of repression, the mountain becomes another prison, a place in which he is cut off from all civilized life, where mail is infrequent and the radio does not always function. On the mountain, in the green monochrome, he experiences the profound loneliness of the guerrilla, the underground man, the prisoner. Again and again, he notices the difference in his face: the frown, the aggressiveness in his eyes, the sharpness that results from "the strain of trying to see and not being able to see all the things and thoughts that are dissolving before you."

On the mountain he learns that "ideas and memories are the most in-

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Earl Shorris is the author of Under the Fifth Sun: A Novel of Pancho Villa *(Delacorte).*

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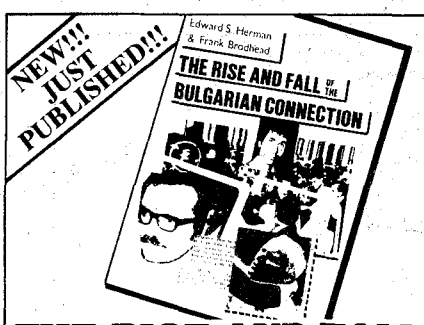

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE BULGARIAN CONNECTION

By Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead

The most ambitious disinformation coup of the 1980s: A handful of reactionary journalists with extensive intelligence connections turned the truth on its head. For more than four years, western audiences were inundated with tales of "the Bulgarian Connection"—an elaborate scenario asserting that Mehmet Ali Agca, the Turkish fascist who tried to kill the Pope, wasn't a fascist after all, but an agent of the Bulgarians and the KGB.

But when the case finally came to trial, it fell apart; Agca claimed he was Jesus and offered to raise the dead. More important, no evidence was ever found to corroborate *anything* he said. In fact, the evidence strongly suggested Agca had been coached while in prison to reverse his story.

This book analyzes how and why the media—and the reading public—were so totally duped. It is a case study in western disinformation.

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timate part of man, where nobody can scrutinize, where not even the harshness of the mountain can penetrate." He learns to nourish memories, to hold himself together when the news comes in a letter that the woman he loves has gone with another man. He explains, "When that happens, yes, you start to feel the loneliness, the isolation. And that's when, if you don't have a political-ideological mental framework, you desert or go crazy."

In the prison of being underground, in the loneliness of the mountain, he is like Boethius, who was visited in his prison cell and consoled by Philosophy. But for Cabezas, Philosophy appears not as the nurse in whose house he had been cared for since his youth; for him Philosophy is the thinking of Ernesto Che Guevara. When he feels he can no longer walk in the mud and brambles, when he is hungry and the weight of his pack is unbearable and the heavy pistol in his pocket has rubbed away the skin on his bony hip, his leader speaks of the philosophy of revolution, and the thought of the "new man" sustains him.

The most curious thing about Omar Cabezas, the prisoner of the mountain or the prisoner of the town or merely the poor boy admiring the fingernails and buttocks of the rich girls at play—the one incomprehensible attribute is his unending good will. Even when his beloved guerrilla leader is killed in an ambush, Cabezas does not lose his good will. He describes his fear for himself, his doubts about the movement, the tragedy of a Quixote like his dead leader, like Che; he does not speak of rage or mention revenge. Philosophy is his nurse and he is healed: "You see, I wanted to live, because I went into the mountains with a fistful of ideals tight in my hand."

Fire From the Mountain is a book of the mind, a conversion experience, Dostoyevsky without darkness. The man after the revolution remembers the boy who spray-painted slogans on university walls and stole condoms and knew about John Travolta. "To be like Che . . . to be like Che" is his desire, almost his mantra. It is the "new man" he wants to make of himself, the "new man" according to Che. He understands the mountain as a myth, fire as a symbol; he writes a book remembering, knowing that he remembers, using his consciousness to invite the reader into his journey, considering, foreshadowing; he tells the reader who will die and who will desert long before those things occur. The book is driven not by suspense but by foreshadowing, sent forward by the inertia of tragedies, drawn forward by the triumphant good will of the conscious hero.

In overcoming the prison of oppression and the prison of the mountain, the isolated man, the man hunted by the National Guard, finds the roots of his revolution in an old man who fought at the side of Sandino in the same mountains in the same cause in an earlier generation. Although Cabezas is not comfortable with the common people, although he speaks of the loneliness of being among uneducated people, although the notion of class is always present in a man who wants to do something *for* the poor and the peasants, he writes so lovingly of his encounters with the *campesinos* that the reader comes to trust the intentions of the writer. It is possible that Omar Cabezas may actually be seeking responsibility rather than power.

The credence the reader gives to the history and the reconstruction of history in *Fire From the Mountain* comes from the quality of the writing. Cabezas is a literate man, one who seems, even in English translation, to revel in the vitality of ordinary speech. He knows something about the novelist's trick of conquering disbelief with the details of daily life. While describing a difficult march down the mountain, Cabezas digresses to remember and thus to mourn one of the malnourished, weakened men who were in his guerrilla unit:

> He didn't smoke and had a terrible sweet tooth. Sometimes he was inspired to write; he wrote little poems that he showed me. He was always talking about his little girl—he had a daughter; he didn't say much about his wife; mainly he spoke of his daughter. I even remember what size pants he wore—size 32.

The prison and the prisoners exist, but through the intercession of Philosophy the prisoners are stronger than the prison and have discovered its weakness. They know what to do. It is the ancient pattern described in *The Golden Bough*: the king is weak, he must be replaced; the bough is taken from the tree, the woods must be cleansed by cutting down the tree. The analogous weakness of the prison is in its ideas. The old king dies for lack of the consolation of Philosophy, and the new king learns.

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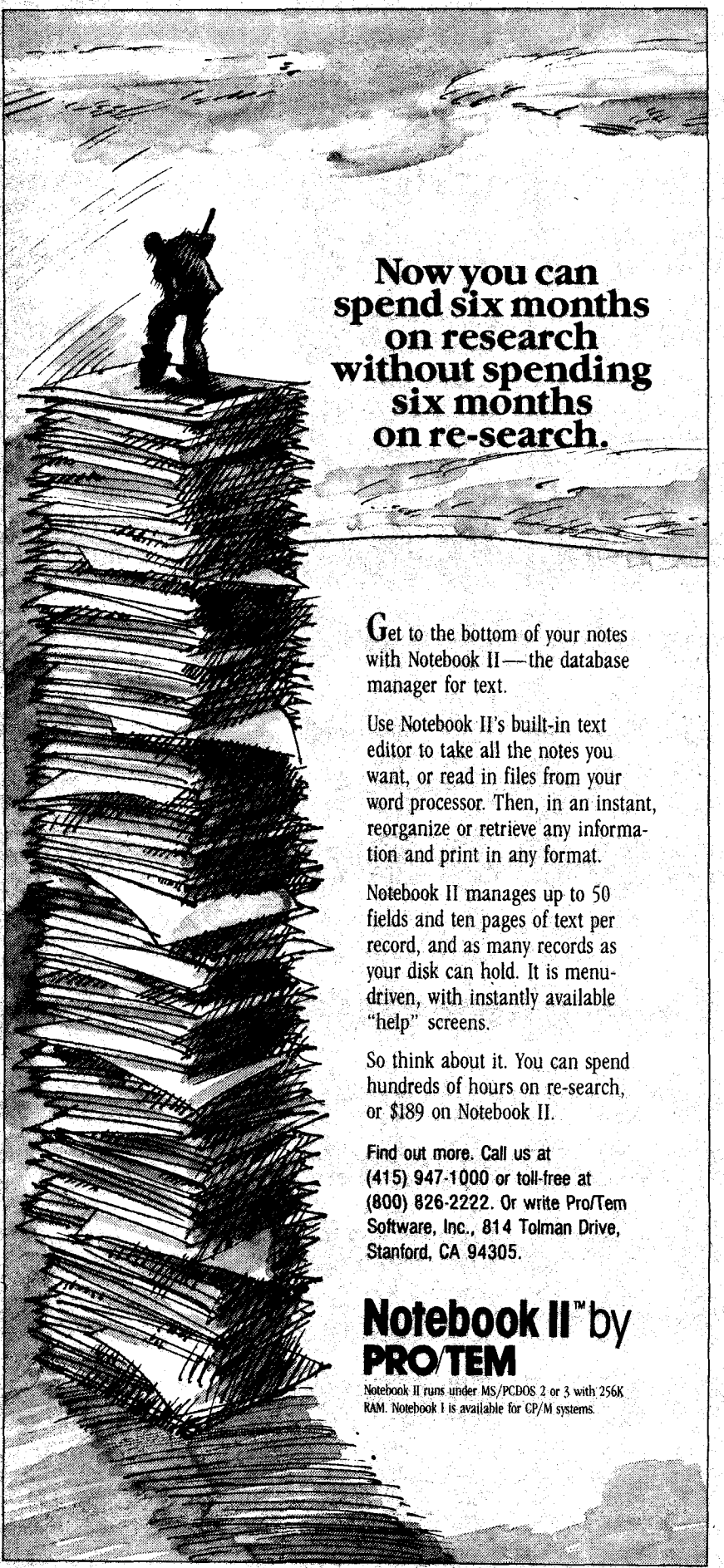
Consider the difference between Omar Cabezas and Jack Henry Abbott, the prisoner who found his way into the confused romanticism of Norman Mailer.

Abbott claims to have "read all but a few of the world's classics" during five years in maximum security. He is, he says, a communist, but he wrote to Mailer: "I want consolation more than anything in this world. I cannot help it if I have not been consoled by God, by a vision of the true Glory of God. I mean this with all my heart. Science is not consolation to me, any more than any abstract knowledge of the world can be a consolation." Abbott survives his ordeal on the strength of his hatred; in contrast to Cabezas, whose motivation is good will and whose consolation is the philosophy of "man's responsibility to raise up others out of poverty and exploitation." Both men have been prisoners (Abbott is back in prison, having killed a man shortly after being released on parole), both have written the required autobiography, but only one is a hero.

The distinction cannot be connected to their politics, for both men profess communism and neither fails at heroism for the flaw that Carlyle saw in Cromwell: "Poor Cromwell,—Great Cromwell! The inarticulate Prophet; Prophet who could not *speak*." Only a silly mind could be won over to Abbott's side, but Abbott, in the letters collected in his book, could speak! Abbott is eliminated from the category of heroes because a hero must be capable of consolation by Philosophy, a hero must be for man. To defy Zeus is one thing; to defy Zeus for the purpose of bringing fire to man is the act of a hero.

To a man who is warm, in Solzhenitsyn's sense, a prison seems a place where people are locked in, but the literature of prisons makes it clear that the opposite is true: a prison is a place where the world is locked out. Otherwise, solitary confinement would be an intolerable magnifier of the nature of imprisonment; otherwise, there would be no letters from prison, not from Gramsci or Dostoyevsky or Solzhenitsyn; otherwise, Batista would never have permitted Castro to survive his time on the Isle of Pines. According to his widow, Osip Mandelstam understood the nature of prison and the reason why there is such a rich literature of prison writings: "Any ruler is only too happy if his subjects put the fear of God in each other with stories from jail." And of course it is so; there must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be stories from jail—a secret prison is useless, for a threat cannot be unknown. It is neither stupidity nor inefficiency that permits prisoners to tell their tales; jailers have no choice but to risk the creation of heroes.

Among jailers, either of the mind or the body, the Russians have no peer, and in no other prisons does Philosophy so console the prisoners. But it was an American, as Tolstoy tells us in *Resurrection*, who stated most accurately the consolation of the political prisoner: "Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison." After observing the lives of prisoners in Siberia, however, Tolstoy, in the person of Prince Nekhlyudov, speaks not of Thoreau but of the need to abolish all prisons, for by such inhuman institutions, "crime, instead of being prevented, was extended."

Dostoyevsky consoled himself in *The House of the Dead* by understanding the meaning of the beastliness of prison for the general society:

> Any man who has tasted this power, this boundless opportunity to humiliate with the deepest degradation another being made in the image of God, becomes despite himself the servant instead of the master of his own emotions. Tyranny is a habit. . . . The man and the citizen perish eternally in the tyrant, and a return to human dignity, to remorse and regeneration, becomes almost completely impossible to him. Besides this, example and the possibility of such arbitrary power act like a contagion on the whole of society; such despotism is a temptation. A society which contemplates such manifestations calmly is already corrupted at its roots.

Now comes *Against All Hope*, a description by Armando Valladares of twenty-two years of torture, humiliation, degradation and assassination of political prisoners in postrevolutionary Cuba. The character of the book is in the title. It is a book against—a litany of evil acts, a victim's complaint. And it is a book so poorly written, so carelessly edited and so unfaithfully translated that the reader must struggle through every page, battling lack of interest and disbelief. Poor Armando Valladares! He has escaped his prison only to find new enemies in his pen and his publisher. Is it possible that a man who publishes books is, like Cromwell, a prophet who cannot speak?

In 1960, Armando Fernando Valladares y Perez, a minor bureaucrat in the Ministry of Communications in Havana, was awakened by two armed men from the Political Police. After his house was searched, Valladares was taken to prison, although no evidence against him was found. He was tried for acts of sabotage and terrorism and sentenced to thirty years in jail, although no case was presented against him. His crime, he says, was that "I had frequently spoken out against Communism as a political system because it went against my religious beliefs and some of my more idealistic notions of the world."

He concludes, "No tribunal in a government of laws could have found me guilty," but the translator confuses the word *derecho* ("laws") with *derecha* ("political right"), so that Valladares tells his English-speaking reader: "No tribunal in a more rightist regime could. . . ."

The prisoner is placed in La Cabaña, where he witnesses the execution of many brave and innocent men. He describes them dying defiantly, one man crying, "Down with Commun——" as he is executed, dying with the word half-spoken. Another shouts, "Viva Cristo Rey!" in the last instant of his life. But a few pages later, we learn that the men were gagged before they were led into the moat surrounding the prison to stand before the firing squad. The reader suffers the uneasiness of distrust: Valladares has written an indictment of a government, a revolution, perhaps of the very nature of revolution, yet with-

TO A YOUNG NOVITIATE

for T.G. (1947–1974)

For months the ancient text lay unillumined
By the lamplight from your bedside table,
And you had turned to other things to find
What's there about us, and within—and how
The spindrift glitter drifted out beyond
Your window then!—for your desire was your
Converging faith, though desire is now a stone.
And what you found at last, or didn't find
In that wilderness of stars quick with the sleep
Of all those things your waking mind still kept
From you—could it only dream you back to this
Sad end? Ten years late, and still not knowing
The answer to that question, I've turned again
To your troubling letters, and as one always can
In looking back, I've found those clues
Which neither deepen nor explain, yet keep me
Feeling the little we could know was there
If only we'd known how you wanted us to listen.

And so each year I grow a little less impatient
With you, Tom, though still no less confused
With what you say is not yet ours to know:
Dying, you turned into the memory of yourself,
And so into another of those myriad stars rising
Tonight above your native hills in Kentucky,
Another blank, imponderable glint against
The sky. And as with so many things for which
The mind can't find its usual explanations—
Not poverty, or greed, or cowardice, or
Anger, it seems tonight the only response
You've left to us is to sit here in the dark
Of our own blind patience and unknowing.
And perhaps, after all, you were right to say
It would almost be enough if we could ever,
Just once, and if only for a moment,
Be as much in the world as the world's in us—
And what's ever there to stop us but ourselves.

Sherod Santos

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in thirty pages there occur bizarre mistranslations and inconsistencies.

The book is a mess. Valladares forgets to tell the reader the length of his sentence; the narrative stops for explanations of concurrent political events, later events, prior events; the narrative fades and returns and goes off in dull digressions. The English version does not coincide with the Spanish original. Paragraphs have been moved from one chapter to another, sentences have been deleted, clichés have been added. All this in a book that needed the artfulness of Solzhenitsyn or the soul of Dostoyevsky to escape the misery of a whine.

And yet, a man suffered; his human rights were torn out of his life.

Valladares was transferred to the Isle of Pines. Soon thereafter he and several other men managed to escape into the fields surrounding the prison, where they hid, waiting for a boat to pick them up. The boat did not appear as arranged on the first night or on the second. Valladares had broken three bones in his foot during the escape, and he was in terrible pain. Unable to get off the island, the escaped men were caught and brought back to prison. Valladares was given no medical attention. When he complained, William Gálvez, the commandant of the prison, replied, "Do you mean to tell me that you're cynical enough to ask for medical help?"

It was the insane logic of prisons, the argument against which no victim can defend, Nelson Algren's cop asking the man in the interrogation room, "If you're not guilty, how come you're bleeding?" And it was the beginning of the horror in the life of Armando Valladares, for he was stripped naked, beaten, a man jumped on his broken foot; then he was taken to a punishment cell, where the door was welded shut and the guards dumped buckets of urine and feces down through the ceiling onto him. To make life worse, in the darkness of the cell, cockroaches and rats crawled over him, fungus grew on the filth that covered his body, and the guards used long poles to poke him awake whenever he found the respite of sleep.

Valladares says he was sustained by memory and religion, but it is merely a statement; he does not take us with him into his strength. The reader suspects that the truth of his resistance is more accurately expressed when he says, "I had made a singular discovery—pain can also be a spur to struggle."

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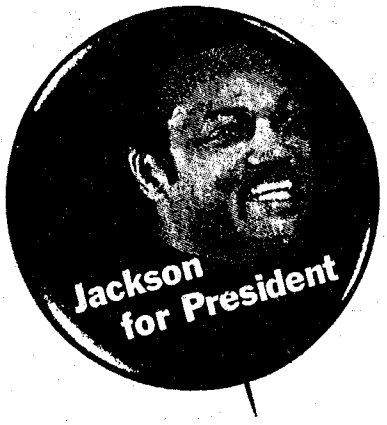

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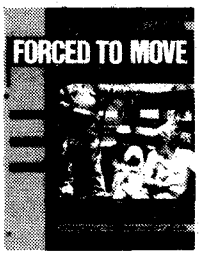
Introduction by Congressman Ron Dellums



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During his years in prison, he met the daughter of one of his cellmates, a young girl with whom he corresponded and who eventually became his wife in a prison ceremony. He tells us almost nothing of their courtship, and the love he professes for her is of a curious kind, for at the conclusion of the marriage ceremony he thinks:

> But at least when Martha left Cuba, she would do it as my legal wife. We had talked about how useful her work for gaining my freedom could be abroad. We planned a whole series of activities aimed at creating a public-opinion campaign that would force Castro to free me. She had what it takes—she was a born activist.

The ordeal of Valladares goes on and on. At each new turn in his litany of horrors, he describes what is coming as the worst or the darkest or the most desperate thing that ever happened to a human being. He tells and tells, struggling to find new superlatives for beastliness, but he does not seek the human detail the novelist knows will win the reader, and he never seems to think. In all the days in darkness, in solitude, he does not seem to have stopped to discover the meaning of his imprisonment; he only asserts that God is good and communism is bad; he is against. In his most desperate moment, he writes a poem:

> They've taken everything away
> from me
> pens
> pencils
> but I still have life's ink
> —my own blood—
> and I'm still writing poems with that.

The tragedy is that Valladares has written a commonplace. Jack Abbott also said of his time in solitary confinement: "I write with my blood because I have nothing else."

After fifteen years in prison Valladares made contact with Amnesty International. Then the poems he smuggled out of his cell began to be published. PEN took up his cause. Finally, more than twenty years after his arrest, the Spanish writer Francisco Arrabal brought the case to the attention of President François Mitterrand of France, who sent a message via Regis Debray to Fidel Castro asking for the release of the prisoner. By that time Valladares was so ill from mistreatment and long hunger strikes in protest against forced "rehabilitation," including the wearing of the blue uniform issued to common prisoners, that he was unable to walk. According to Valladares, he was put on an intensive program of physical therapy, and eighteen months later, when he was able to walk, he was taken to Madrid on a Russian plane and released.

Why did Valladares survive? Why did he refuse to be "rehabilitated" or to put on the blue uniform of the common prisoner? Does Valladares understand what Foucault calls "the strategic opposition between illegality and delinquency?" Is that why he chose not to put on the uniform of the delinquent? Or was it a far less subtle understanding of the difference between the classes of men in prison? I think I know, but I do not know. Like Cromwell, he cannot speak. Or perhaps he will not speak. Or does not know. Autobiography is not the work of a disinterested person; it is incumbent on the writer to make us believe, and to do that he must first make us understand.

The prisoner who does not acquiesce to his captors begins to be a hero, but to be in opposition is only a beginning. The criteria that determine a hero are many: a hero must speak convincingly; a hero must be consoled by Philosophy, which intends the good; a hero must have dignity; and finally, a victim is not a hero.

It is unfair for a man who is warm to judge the work of a man who is cold, but I do not think *Against All Hope* succeeds in making a hero of the prisoner.

Perhaps Valladares did not intend to be a hero. After all, he claims to have been imprisoned unfairly; the prosecution never even produced evidence to show a crime had been committed. There were no acts of terrorism, there was no sabotage, no destruction; he was sentenced to thirty years for grumbling. If he cannot tell us why he survived, maybe Nadezhda Mandelstam can. She wrote: "Most of the people I knew who went to the camps died there almost at once. Intellectuals and professional people did not last long—it was scarcely worth living anyway. The only reason one could have to go on living was to remember it all and later tell the story—perhaps thereby making people think twice before embarking on such lunacies again."

Then Armando Valladares is speaking to Omar Cabezas, reminding him to be like Che, to remember that Che called for jails everywhere to "be shining free of political prisoners." Whether Valla-

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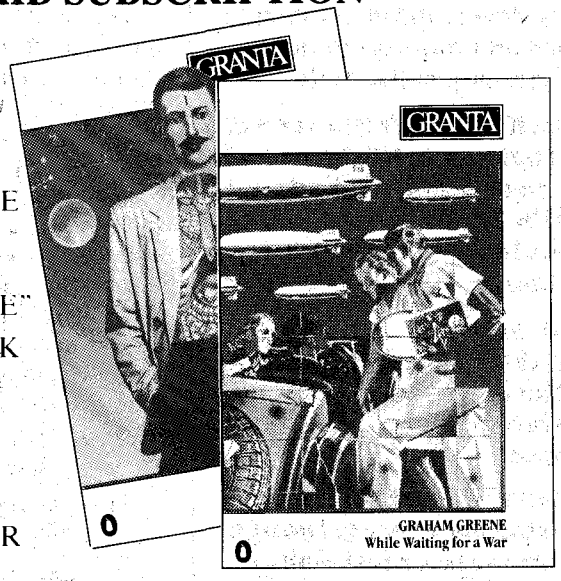

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dares is the inevitable consequence of Cabezas, as he implies, remains to be seen. There is, however, that longing for the father whom the hero overthrew. □

Private Matters

JOSEPHINE HUMPHREYS

THE GOOD MOTHER. *By Sue Miller. Harper & Row. 310 pp. $17.95.*

Anna Karenina was not a good mother. Sex distracted her from maternal interests. In horror she finally realized that obsessive love for Vronsky had crowded out her love for Seryozha, her son. Emma Bovary wasn't a good mother, either. Poor Berthe whimpered at home while Emma and Léon rolled through the streets of Rouen in that ominous carriage of love, windows closed against the world.

Fiction since Emma and Anna has tended to follow the rule implied by Flaubert and Tolstoy: the sexual misbehavior of mothers will be punished, if not by loss of life then by harm to children, an even more gruesome penalty. (I'm thinking particularly of two recent novels, Louise Shivers's *Here to Get My Baby Out of Jail* and John Irving's *The World According to Garp.*)

Sue Miller's stunning first novel, *The Good Mother*, examines the issue of mothers in love with a thorough attention to contemporary mores. Her Anna (surely the name is not an accidental choice) is married to a man not unlike Alexei Karenin or Charles Bovary. The crime of these husbands is that they are boring. Brian Dunlap is not a bad man, not a bad father. In a moment brilliant with the pain of divorce, Anna hears her 4-year-old daughter, Molly, say to him, "I really hate my mom, don't you? We *hate* her, right?" And Brian's answer is at least as wise as the advice books. "No," he says, "I can still love Mom even though she and I don't want to live together anymore. And you can still love her, even though you're being with me for a few days. You can always love us both."

But Anna doesn't love Brian; he has become "peripheral" to her life. The divorce is amicable and clean; one wonders what might have become of Emma and Anna K. if they could have got divorces and custody and flextime jobs, as Anna D. does. She gets a chance to start over again, to live happily in Cambridge with her daughter—poorer, to be sure, because she is a piano teacher and will never earn as much money as Brian, a lawyer, but she doesn't mind. She is a strong, independent woman, without much interest in money.

And she's a good mother. Not a Supermom, but a mother who loves and respects her child while leaving room for her own growth. The dialogue between Molly and Anna is beautifully written; it reveals an unusually comfortable friendship between mother and child.

This is also a mother who knows her child—*studies* her child, in fact. "She was, then and later," Anna says,

> the kind of child whose imagination transforms everything, who sometimes has trouble coming back to the reality of a situation, an object. As I lay there listening to her private play, I felt I was hearing the expression of her independence, the potential for her existence without me. . . . Hearing her that morning, so competent at imagining her own world, made me believe she would be all right, she would heal and recover from what Brian and I were doing to her.

Everything goes smoothly. Anna succeeds in establishing her independence not only from Brian but also from a set of controlling parents and grandparents, and she finds a job to supplement her income from the piano lessons. She even meets a man, the dark and shaggy Leo, artist and enthusiastic lover. "I felt I'd never been so happy," she says:

> Our lives seemed magically interpenetrated, commingled, even as we each separated into all the day's complicated activities. I had never expected it to seem so graceful and easy, but Molly's seemingly complete comfort with Leo was like a benediction on all aspects of the relationship, even the sexual.

Things go so well, in fact, that one begins to glance around nervously for the story here. The pace of the narrative has been an easy lope; halfway through the novel there is still no major conflict, certainly no hint of the clash between

Josephine Humphreys won the Hemingway Award for her first novel, Dreams of Sleep *(Viking/Penguin).*

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"two powerful sets of feelings, the erotic and the maternal" promised on the dust jacket. Molly and Leo are pals. When, and how, can the erotic and the maternal possibly collide? Anna Dunlap is not the kind of woman who will allow a collision; she is in control. Leo spends the nights with Anna but tries to be up before Molly wakes in the morning. Anna shows no signs of neglecting Molly for Leo.

It is a mark of Sue Miller's masterful narrative technique that when the plot suddenly rounds a bend upon an enormous surprise, it seems at once an unexpected and inevitable turn. The story is off and running, building a momentum that never flags. The surprise, as enormous to Anna as to us, is this: Brian sues to regain custody of Molly, alleging that Leo is guilty of "sexual irregularities" with the child.

Anna's world changes. In an instant, outsiders—lawyers, social worker, psychiatrist, judge—converge on the threesome that had seemed to Anna so magically happy. The court must decide whether Leo is guilty of the charges, and to what extent Anna can be held responsible for the atmosphere of permissiveness that allowed such an incident to occur. Anna is sure of Leo's innocence, or at least of the innocence of his intent: the charges are based on an accidental meeting of Molly and Leo in the bathroom, when Molly, seeing Leo naked, asked if she could touch him, and he, in confusion and in the spirit of openness that Anna had established in the household, said yes.

After the rich, introspective first half of the novel, the second half is streamlined and cinematic, made up of courtroom dialogue and interviews instead of Anna's thoughts. It's as if her thoughts had drained away under the scrutiny of the public eye. Since there are no criminal charges, there are no limits to the inquiry, and custody will be awarded by the subjective decision of a judge. Anna's whole existence is relevant. No question is left unasked. A caseworker discovers in the course of an interview that Anna and Leo once made love while Molly was asleep in their bed with them. A lawyer wins from Leo an admission that he involuntarily "responded sexually" the time Molly touched him. Anna begins to understand the sort of nightmare she is in, one in which private truth begins to look grotesque.

Sue Miller manages the emotional drama of these scenes so expertly that

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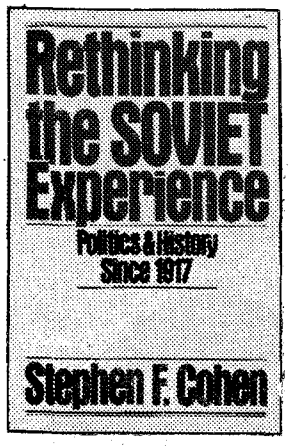

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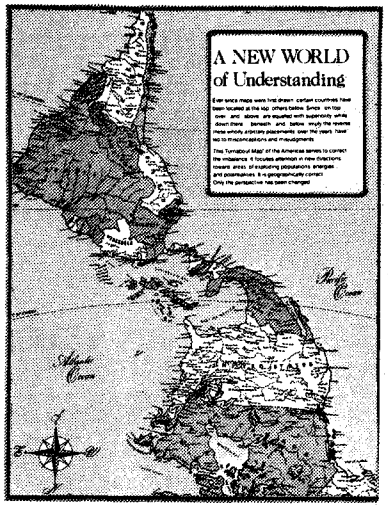

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one is not likely to notice that the original issue has turned murky. What was the question? Whether erotic and maternal love can coexist? But they did, easily; the trouble came from elsewhere. Whether sexually miscreant mothers are punished by society? But this mother got her divorce fair and square, and surely nobody is suggesting that she and Leo ought to have got married before sleeping together. Not even Brian's lawyers say that. The issue now has become whether a woman can lose her child if the man she loves makes a mistake, and how hard she will fight to defend him.

But Anna doesn't fight at all. She betrays Leo instead of defending him. How are we to read this ending? She loses custody of Molly anyway, as it was obvious she would. Lawyers prevail. Her surrender is an act of fear rather than courage. Anna knows Leo is not to blame—but she blames him, losing her child and her integrity at once, and for no great cause.

It is true that custody cases are regularly lost in this ignoble way. The novel is realistic, timely, important. But Anna looked at first as if she might prove to be heroic. Instead she does herself in, as surely as if she had gone under the wheels of a train or stuffed her mouth with arsenic. In her acceptance she resembles another antecedent, Hester Prynne. "You never even *tried*, Anna," a friend says after the case is lost and Anna has begun her new existence, diminished and passionless, her hope as intense as an orphan's.

How brave that a first novel should attempt these extraordinarily difficult questions, questions so emotionally tough that they complicate the usual business of the novel, the expectations of character and plot. And how brave of Sue Miller to avoid easy answers, to leave the puzzle finally unsolved. Because her Anna is, in the end, human rather than heroic, the novel is all the more disturbing and powerful. ☐

The Road to Heaven: Science Fiction and the Militarization of Space

THOMAS M. DISCH

Readers of the Sunday *New York Times* of March 30 may have noticed a full-page "Letter to the American People" in The Week in Review section of the paper, in which it was urged that the most fitting memorial for the seven astronauts killed in the explosion of the Challenger would be

> the restoration and enhancement of the shuttle fleet and resumption of a full launch schedule.
>
> For the seven.
>
> In keeping with their spirit of dedication to space exploration and with the deepest respect for their memory, we, the undersigned, are asking you to join us in urging the President and the Congress to build a new shuttle orbiter to carry on the work of these seven courageous men and women.
>
> AS LONG AS THEIR DREAM LIVES ON,

Thomas M. Disch is the author of many works of science fiction.

THE SEVEN LIVE ON IN THE DREAM

Following this appeal were four columns in 12-point type of the names of the ad's eighty-eight "underwriters," plus a 9-point-type rabble of 200 other contributors. The letter and the sponsoring Challenger campaign were the inspiration of science fiction writer C.J. Cherryh, who, with the assistance of her colleague Janet Morris, recruited the underwriters, each of whom contributed $350 toward the ad's $36,000 cost. Most readers will recognize the first name on the list, that of Isaac Asimov, and there is a sprinkling of other "name" SF and fantasy writers, but the extent to which the list is composed of science fiction professionals—writers, editors, agents and fan clubs—would be evident only to someone familiar with the field. By my own census, fifty-four of the eighty-eight underwriters have some connection with science fiction, as do a much smaller proportion of those in small print. Undoubtedly many of the names I don't recognize are present through the same connection.

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Edward Said: "Naipaul's constituency is not the world of truth seekers everywhere. He writes to the western liberal who wants very much to be reassured that, after all, after 'we' left Pakistan, after 'we' left Malaysia and after 'we' left Iran, things got worse. To flatter a prejudice is not 'simply' to tell the truth."

Conor Cruise O'Brien: "I'm satisfied to tell the truth. I can't be sure which of my statements will or will not advance the cause of freedom, and neither can V.S. Naipaul."

George Steiner: "To be sitting in opulent safety in some immensely rewarded university chair and make oneself a spokesman for terrorism in a far part of the earth is contemptible, sheer cant. An intellectual must at least try to live what he professes."

John Lukacs: "Kissinger became a protege of Nelson Rockefeller—another 'giant of independent thinking'—and the two of them came up with the nuclear shelter and 'the missile gap.' Of course we know there was no 'gap' between '57 and '61. But that didn't hurt Kissinger's reputation at all. He was an 'expert' in a democracy which likes to take the word of experts. In this respect he didn't much differ from sociologists, economists or those sex therapists whose contribution to marital unhappiness is yet to be measured."

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For many science fiction writers and fans the perpetuation of a manned space program stands as the central tenet of their faith in mankind's destiny as explorer and colonizer of outer space—today the solar system, tomorrow the stars. This faith was promulgated long before the National Aeronautics and Space Administration existed. Its adherents vary in their sophistication from Trekkies dressed in the pajamas of their gods to engineers and physicists in the employ of NASA and related agencies, but it is for all concerned a literal and often fervent faith, and NASA has become the church at which its worship is conducted.

SF writers have a legitimate claim to be considered not only the prophets of that faith but the builders of the church. If poets are the world's unacknowledged legislators, SF writers have been its unacknowledged civil and mechanical engineers, doodling their designs for rocket ships and spacesuits on that most plastic medium, the adolescent mind. The influence of such writers of the 1930s and 1940s as Robert Heinlein, Asimov and Jack Williamson, all three still productive and signers of the *Times* letter, on the teen-age readers who would grow up to staff the space agencies has been widely attested. The symposiasts at the recent PEN congress who took as their theme the imagination of the state, only to lament that imagination was what the state specifically lacked, evidently had read little science fiction or failed to consider its relation to the space program. Such an oversight is not to be wondered at, for most literary people regard science fiction as Dr. Pritikin would a Twinkie, while most political liberals have disregarded the space program, considering it a relatively harmless boondoggle, useful, if at all, as a sop to the Cerberus of the defense industry. Better a man on the moon than another missile silo in Kansas.

The enthusiasm expressed by President Reagan for the Strategic Defense Initiative, or Star Wars program, and his ability to translate that enthusiasm into budgetary reality has made both dismissals—of science fiction and of the space program—intellectually indefensible. Whatever its merits or demerits as literature, science fiction's role as a debating society, moral-support system and cheerleading section for the present *and future* personnel of space-related industries and military services makes it worth examining.

The most remarkable of SF's ancestral voices in this regard, and one that is still with us, is that of Robert Heinlein. Heinlein's stories of the near-future conquest of space, which began to appear in the late 1930s, were written in a manner more naturalistic and verisimilar than the naïve space operas common at that time. For Heinlein outer space was not a realm of faerie but simply the next frontier, and he was its recruiting sergeant. In 1952 he wrote: "What one man can imagine, another man can do. Youths who build hot-rods are not dismayed by spaceships; in their adult years they will build such ships. In the meantime they will read stories of interplanetary travel."

Heinlein was not alone in this ambition, nor was he even the chief prophet laureate of the conquest of space. Those laurels must go to Arthur Clarke. However, claims of priority, pre-eminence or uniqueness obscure one of the genre's salient strengths, that much science fiction inhabits a consensual future that is open—since ideas can't be copyrighted—to all comers. Michel Butor, in an essay on science fiction written in 1960, deplored the heterogeneous nature of the

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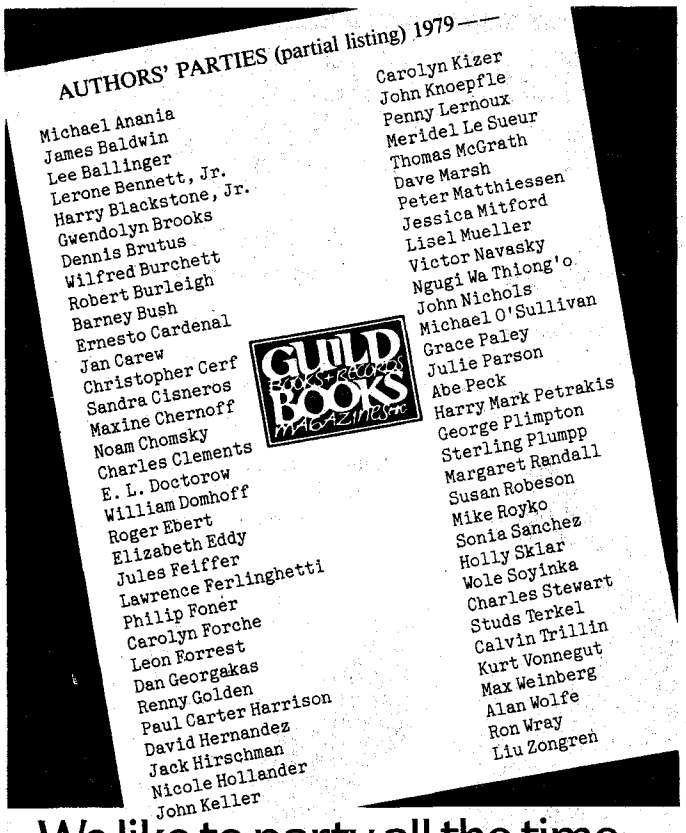

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genre's individualistic writers. He called for it to become "a collective work, like the science which is its indispensable basis":

> Now, let us imagine that a certain number of authors . . . were to take as the setting of their stories a single city, named and situated with some precision in space and in future time; that each author were to take into account the description given by the others in order to introduce his own new ideas. This city would become a common possession to the same degree as an ancient city that has vanished; gradually, all readers would give its name to the city of their dreams and would model that city in its image.
>
> SF, if it could limit and unify itself, would be capable of acquiring over the individual imaginations a constraining power comparable to that of any classical mythology. Soon all authors would be obliged to take this predicted city into account, readers would organize their actions in relation to its imminent existence, ultimately they would find themselves obliged to build it.

Dismaying as Butor's agenda may sound in its zeal for imaginative conformity, the consensual future that evolved in the natural process of SF writers reading over, and standing on, one another's shoulders very nearly fills Butor's prescription—and has had much the effect that he predicted: the city is being built.

Since Hiroshima there has been an element of science fiction's consensual future that cannot be contemplated with the same hypothetical good cheer and bravado with which mankind's future in space is envisioned. The possibility of nuclear war, and its potential for annihilation on a planetary scale, has become the defining nightmare of the twentieth century, a consensual future no one admits consenting to but which no one can resist imagining and recoiling from. On the whole, SF writers have been as reluctant to think about the unthinkable as anyone else, and their reasons may be rooted in the nature of fiction, which must concern the lives and actions of people, and in the nature of atomic holocaust, which brings all lives and actions to an end. Only a few novelists, and those not within the genre, have described the worst-case scenario of universal annihilation. The common practice has been to depict the post-holocaust world as a kind of damaged Eden, where a few survivors scavenge a subsistence living from the wreck of civilization. Literally hundreds of novels have been written on this theme, a massed choir of whistling in the dark.

One of the most remarkable of these post-holocaust fantasies was written by Heinlein in 1964: *Farnham's Freehold*, a book that became holy writ to the survivalist movement. It was Heinlein's peculiar inspiration to find a silver lining in the prospect of nuclear holocaust. Here is his hero—who, with his family, mistress and black servant, has survived a Russian sneak attack by virtue of his prudence in having provided his suburban home with a fallout shelter—stating the case for nuclear Armageddon:

> "Barbara, I'm not as sad over what has happened as you are. It might be good for us. I don't mean us six; I mean our country."
>
> She looked startled. "How?"
>
> "Well—it's hard to take the long view when you are crouching in a shelter and wondering how long you can hold out. But—Barbara, I've

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worried for years about our country. It seems to me that we have been breeding slaves—and I believe in freedom. This war may have turned the tide. This may be the first war in history which kills the stupid rather than the bright and able—where it makes any distinction. . . .

"Wars have always been hardest on the best young men. This time the boys in the service are as safe or safer than civilians. And of civilians those who used their heads and made preparations stand a far better chance. . . . that will improve the breed. When it's over, things will be tough, and that will improve the breed still more. For years the surest way of surviving has been to be utterly worthless and breed a lot of worthless kids. All that will change."

She nodded thoughtfully. "That's standard genetics, but it seems cruel."

"It *is* cruel. But no government has yet been able to repeal natural laws, though they keep trying."

She shivered in spite of the heat. "I suppose you're right. No, I *know* you're right."

The events that follow in *Farnham's Freehold* don't bear out this blithe new application of social Darwinism (black Africa, it turns out, has inherited the earth, and enslaved the surviving whites, whose children are the delicacies at their cannibal feasts) but Farnham's words are not intended ironically. When Heinlein's heroes speak out—the superiority of the warrior caste and the social and biological benefits to be derived from war are among their other recurrent themes—they speak out unequivocally on behalf of their creator.

In recent years, though Heinlein has continued to write in spate, his novels have taken sex as their theme, and while he continues to be able to amaze and appall the liberal imagination like almost no other SF writer, one must turn to the work of those who have inherited his mantle as concerned and active right-wing ideologues to see the direct relationship between contemporary science fiction and the Strategic Defense Initiative. Specifically, the work of Jerry Pournelle.

Pournelle came to science fiction *from* the space program, having worked both for government agencies and the space division of Rockwell International. Early in the 1970s, he began to publish stories in *Analog*, an SF magazine whose editor, John W. Campbell, had discovered and nurtured Heinlein some thirty years before. Pournelle is not a writer notable for inventiveness, thematic range or dramatic skill. His artlessness may derive in part from a principled aversion to literature, a word with bad associations among those SF writers who identify themselves as "hard-core," i.e., technophilic and, usually, ultra-right. In a 1979 interview he declared:

> I don't pay much attention to style. In fact, some people might say they can believe that after reading one of my books. I'm not particularly interested in creating 'literature' per se. . . . I enjoy writing science fiction. It's easy to write and I'm familiar with the material. It also lets you get across your view of the world, which is something I like doing. In addition, there is the phenomenon of "fandom," which is extremely gratifying.

Pournelle's view of the world has been succinctly expressed by the title of a series of anthologies he edits for Tor Books: *There Will Be War*. This series offers its readers nonfiction polemics on that perennial theme of the military-industrial establishment, the need for arms, more arms. Only a strong "defensive" posture can prevent nuclear Armageddon; a further benefit of S.D.I. is that it will make possible the kind of limited wars that furnish the scenery for the hairy-chested sci-fi adventures of space-age Rambos. Virtual-

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SURVIVAL FOR ALL

The Alternative to Nuclear War with a Practical Plan for Total Denuclearization

by A.J. Aizenstat

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ly all of Pournelle's noncollaborative fiction falls into this category, and his enthusiasm for the right defense posture has even led him to creative efforts in the field of military fashion. I remember attending an SF convention in Seattle at which Pournelle, a man of Falstaffian proportions, was boasting that the paramilitary uniform he was wearing—he and his fans, of which there were some two dozen, all armed to the teeth with an arsenal of toy weapons—had been tailored to his exacting specifications. None of your off-the-rack camo for the author of *The Mercenary*!

The plot of that book, his first SF success, and those of his later novels, are as calculated to offend and outrage liberal sensibilities as a biker's tattoos. In *The Mercenary* the denouement features the wholesale slaughter of a planet's criminal or unemployed elements (easily decoded as the permanent underclass of today's inner cities), who have been assembled for this purpose by the wily hero in a vast sports arena. When he is not gunning for welfare mothers, Pournelle's favorite villains are Reds or pinkos (on the planet Tran in the far future, in *Janissaries*, the threat to liberty comes from "Cuban advisers and Nationalist Front native Marxists"), but his bêtes noires are Greens, or "ecosymps," as he styles those who oppose the advance of science, technology, nuclear power, NASA and the corporate interests of Rockwell International.

In *Oath of Fealty*, his most readable novel—because it was written in collaboration with Larry Niven, a better storyteller and a cannier ideologue—ecosymps provide that paranoid requisite, an external enemy whose unremitting and unreasoning malice is the mortar binding an otherwise doubtfully viable utopian city of the near future. *Oath* represents the fictional apotheosis of Festung Los Angeles, and its story revolves around the moral right of the affluent to create a polity that excludes the poor. This time around, however, the author does not decree death to the losers but has them tattooed with the book's recurring slogan, "Think of It as Evolution in Action."

Most liberal readers would feel as little incentive to read Pournelle as to study the writings of Lyndon LaRouche. So long as their tribes do not increase at an alarming rate, why worry? Boys with toy guns at SF conventions pose no substantial threat to democracy or global survival. Not, that is, until they grow up to become the scientific advisers of the President and the defense industry. And that is what is happening. In 1984 Pournelle published (with another collaborator, Dean Ing) a nonfiction book, *Mutual Assured Survival*, that marshals the arguments in support of the Star Wars program and presents them in layman's language. These arguments are not original to Pournelle, but the fervor and pugnacity he brings to bear have won for the book commendation from no less a blurb-writer than President Reagan, whose letter to Pournelle is presented in full on the back dust jacket. Reagan writes: "You and your associates [of the Citizens Advisory Panel on National Space Policy, a group of experts that includes Pournelle's collaborators Ing and Niven, his mentor Heinlein, his son Alexander, Alexander's girlfriend Jennifer and James Baen, Pournelle's editor at Simon & Schuster] deserve high praise for addressing with verve and vision the challenges to peace and to our national security. Efforts like this can assist us in achieving a safer and more stable future for this country, for our allies, and, indeed, for all mankind. Thank you, and God bless you."

With this presidential blessing and his chairmanship of the policy-making Systems Assessment Group of the Citizens Advisory Panel, Pournelle must be considered as more than another polemicist or popularizer writing about S.D.I. He has become a semiofficial spokesman for that initiative. No one would challenge his right to the fictional promulgation of his views, but since he has entered the arena of a national debate, one that will ultimately be resolved by the "experts" on each side, the world view he evidences in his other writings is not beside the point. Reagan is choosing his team; it would be well to know where that team is coming from.

This is not to suggest that science fiction as a whole (or even most of the underwriters of the *Times* letter) has become a lobby for NASA and the defense industry. Many SF writers, notably Frederik Pohl, have been outspoken opponents of S.D.I. But the *Times* letter does reflect the strong emotions of the part of the public that sees in the space program a compelling national purpose. The desire to get man into space may become so overriding an imperative for those who share the "dream of the seven" that they may be willing to advocate S.D.I. solely on the basis of

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that desire, calculating—probably correctly—that only by ceding the space program to the military will it receive the funding required for such a mammoth effort. Such a calculation would be, perhaps fatally, a mistake.

As to the immediate issue of the rescheduling of the shuttle program, that decision surely must be based on a rational estimation of the program's safety and the (ever more doubtful) soundness of its management, and on a cool assessment of the value of the shuttle program as against less costly, unmanned alternatives. None of those questions are addressed in the *Times* letter, which implicitly endorses NASA's position that things are basically still A-O.K. "The production facility still exists," the letter states. "The assembly process can be reactivated. The experiments designed for the orbiter bay are waiting. We can recover a program which is one of our nation's greatest resources and mankind's proudest achievements." The *Challenger* disaster was certainly a national tragedy, but the Challenger campaign is an ill-judged response that reflects little credit on the science fiction community. □

Let Them Eat Attitude

MAUREEN MULLARKEY

Dandysme, progenitor of the avant-garde, is an old idea that won't quit the cabaret. Like an aging torch singer, it keeps staging comebacks, playing to audiences that never heard it when it was in better voice. The canons of dandyism have not changed much since Beau Brummel's vanity, insolence and panache titillated George IV. Its cardinal principal is still the same: the dandy is a self-created *objet d' art* who invents himself through his costume and his attitudes. Exemplar of the modern artist, the dandy is a deliberately synthetic personality, a cultural configuration, a style. The dandy-as-artist, like the artist-as-dandy, derives authority more from his airs than from his works.

Air quality is the only thing that has changed. The mythic dandy of Baudelarian stature has given way to a hectic stream of downtown divas and dukes, suited up by 23-year-old designers and smart talking at the Cat Club. Four recent New York monthlies—*Paper*, *Details*, *New York Talk*, *East Village Eye*—are on the scene to clue in young, mobile urbanites who have the income and the inclination to become their own Pygmalions. *Le peintre de la vie moderne* has dwindled to a canny journalism that knows what noises to make about the topics of the hour: fashion, spending and name-dropping.

Another downtown magazine, *Bomb*, which at least cares about the difference between the line-up at the Palladium and the barricades of 1848, tenders itself as the real thing. Its ambition warrants a separate look. But more on that later.

Though all are touted as irreverent journals, only *Paper*, a college cheer to the fun of purchasing power, merits the adjective. The others are too faithful to the graphic-designed gospel of Right Now to qualify. The tatterdemalion chauvinism of the East Village makes the *Eye* more of a local paper but not that much. With modifying differences, each is a serious field manual for the well-heeled, anxious to be in the know.

What is worth knowing is not an issue. All that counts as much as being in the know is being in the money. Money is implicit in the club talk, the high-roller ads, the counterglitz that is the real subject here. Know where to go for a leopard-print vinyl wedding ensemble? A custom carpet with your own mug shot on it? Kiss-my-ass consumption isn't for cops and caseworkers, darling. Don't be fooled by the arch one-liners or the throwaway tongue-in-cheek ("Everyone hates the Upper East Side. I live there so I know"). These papers mean business—business like Andy Warhol means business when he says that making money is art and good business is the best art.

Paper is *New York*'s Best Bets taken over by *National Lampoon*. It's zany, prankish, full of new wave paraphernalia and karmic contraptions for the Boy George in all of us. Can you resist black baby clothes ("mashed carrot stains barely show on them")? A Madonna doll? How about a sixty-pound, cast-iron seal of the City of New York from

Maureen Mullarkey is a painter who writes on art and culture.

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the old West Side Highway ($150 as is, $250 if you want yours cleaned as a gift for a Westway warrior)?

The fun fades when *Paper* peddles political action like another product line. The March issue includes a stump for NOW's pro-choice March for Women's Lives:

> This march can show that we are as passionate about the right to our passions as they [the Right] are to control them. . . . The next time you want to slip into bed with your lover, you may just find the entire Administration right there with you.

The simplification is jarring to anyone who thought the argument was over the right to cancel a life and the discriminatory distribution of that option. Such bumper-sticker politics is as close as the downtown press gets to recognizing real life. To be sure, there are the requisite snipes at Reaganomics, New York real estate values, the Moral Majority. These are part of the pose and go with the costume. The *Eye* even includes a star-struck interview with Susan Rosenberg of the U.S. Armed Clandestine Movement: "There was something vaguely hypnotic in her eyes. . . . This interviewer felt herself overwhelmed by the force of her personality." Politics may be a bore but the political gesture is Style.

Talk, published by two former advertising salesmen, and *Details*, begun by the style editors of the defunct *SoHo Weekly News*, are both ad-saturated, celebrity-obsessed fluffs aimed at fashion jocks. *Talk*, which devised a business plan before an editorial approach, writes 15 percent of its own ads. Executive publisher Dennis Page told Michael Gross of *The New York Times*, "The ads *are* the editorial." But no matter. Just flash a photo of Joseph Beuys in his gray fedora and everyone will think you're an alternative press.

Details's gossip brokering and celebrity interviews are considered its draws. Why? Columnist Stephen Saban's post-Pop, give-a-damn delivery makes no demands. No moral or historical imagination, no reserves of empathy or skepticism are required. The column shares with the old New Journalism the conceit most compatible with the downtown dandy stance: an inflated estimate of the reporter's own experience. The rest is Suzy Knickerbocker, not Tom Wolfe. What you see is what you get: characters without a story line, material making a cult of itself. First they're at the Limelight. Then they go to the Milk Bar. Then somewhere else. They just never cross the street into Radical Chic. The effort to create celebrity keeps getting in the way. Saban's favorite celebrity creation? Go on, guess:

> We found our . . . contact in the Poker Room to thank him for the line passes. The guy standing next to him said, "Stephen Saban, what you doing here?" It was Ken Jordan, a disc jockey at radio station KUNV in Las Vegas whom I'd met at the Palladium in New York. Small world? Incredibly. Impressed, the poker guy offered us *anything* we wanted or needed, including a complimentary steak dinner. We wanted complimentary steak and *chips*, but said thank you, no.

Let them eat ATTITUDE. It's a meager diet even for the young in a hurry to leave home. And *Details*'s readership doesn't seem to have been gone long. An interview with Zach Galligan, 20-ish actor and ideal escort, mentions Zach's mother three times. Also Zach's girlfriend's mother. Elsewhere, out in Vegas, there's Mitchell's mother's best friend: "She must be a great mom. She's what you'd call 'a character.' . . . Definite movie material." Mom shows up in Hal Rubenstein's offhand restaurant reviews: "If you're treating and she sees the check, you may never be able to squeeze hardship money out of her again. Such expensive taste." She makes the gallery scene, too: "Even the kids were impressed by this show, although I'm sure their big-shouldered super-Moms . . . couldn't be persuaded to buy anything for them."

The contrived juvenescence of Cookie Mueller's gallery coverage is cute enough to have been ghosted by Gary Coleman of *Diff'rent Strokes*:

> In creepy prehistory, when Joe Cro-Magnon Man drew a picture of a mastodon on the wall of a communal cave, Bob Cro-Magnon Man probably told him the ears . . . didn't look right. . . . This is not "easy watching" stuff. There are a lot of images that can bump into your sensitivity (that is if you happen to have been born yesterday, as many people seem these days).

Relaxed hip? Not on your life. The column huffs and puffs to manufacture its neo-punk Shirley Temple vulgate. All that hard work just to shoulder the same rusty thunderbox that misfires in the uptown press: "The artist would be a lonely martyr . . . if there wasn't the critic snooping and sucking around. I believe

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critics are as important as artists."

This isn't satire. This is orthodoxy. The elevated status of the estranged artist is taken for granted. So is the attendant elevation of the artist's entourage, everyone sporting unearned symbols of superiority over the audience: "I'm sure all the people traveling from the burbs who have seen this show are going home and telling the family what the wild and wacky new artists are up to downtown."

Surely Cookie knows but isn't telling—artists aren't outsiders anymore. In practice, if not yet in pose, serious artists have come to terms with what Harold Rosenberg called "majority culture." The calculating apparatus of the art world, calibrated by an elite of dealers, curators and auctioneers, meshes with its patrons: Exxon, Citicorp, United Technologies, Philip Morris, Chase et al. Critics, dilated like puff adders to disguise their role ("Like Lenin, I have always thought . . ." announces one critic in the *Eye*), function largely as press agents, engineering taste to guarantee institutional interests. Artists themselves are cheerfully receptive to such felicities of the establishment as its grants, fellowships, ethics and marketing techniques (of which these mags are Exhibit A).

This is where *Bomb* comes in. Begun informally as a conversation piece distributed privately among like-minded artists, writers and assorted *auteurs*, *Bomb* is now an established quarterly. According to editor Betsy Sussler, it is "a spokespiece for the people who make the art." Which art? Primarily the kind that lingers in the tub steeping in its own significance. How is it found? By word of mouth. In other words, whatever else it might be, *Bomb* is essentially a house organ for a self-circulating pool of people in the arts who present themselves, on scanty evidence, as heirs of the avant-garde. *Bomb* maintains a steady grip on the mechanisms of celebrity while it tries to revive the belief that making art is of paramount social consequence, still viable as a radical act.

To assert its continuity with the aspirations of early Modernism, *Bomb*'s name is deliberately reminiscent of *Blast*, put out by Wyndham Lewis, one of the War Office's official artists in World War I and the publisher of Ezra Pound. The comparison is awkward if the bulk of *Bomb*'s contents are held up against Pound's artistic achievement. It is altogether suspect for an audience

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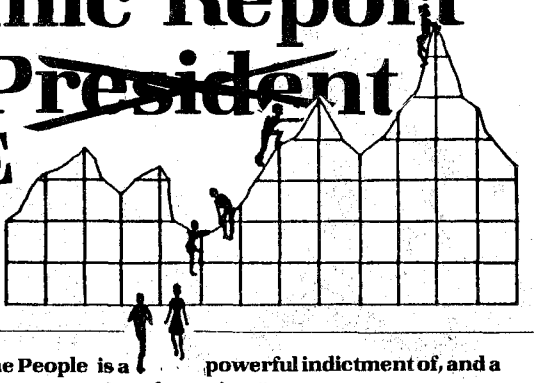

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that would hold Pound accountable for more than his metrics.

The current issue contains a six-page interview and photo spread on painter David Deutsch. Deutsch is on *Bomb*'s board of directors. The fall issue ran a six-page feature on David Salle. Merchandised by Leo Castelli, Salle is one of the best-promoted artists in the business. Salle is also on the magazine's board of directors. Deutsch sells through Blum Helman, a gallery with a downtown and an uptown branch which maintains prime advertising space on the inside cover. Joseph Helman, part owner, is also on the board of directors. And so it goes, from big names to small ones. Is such incestuous publicity at odds with the higher values on which *Bomb*'s tax-exempt status is based? Editor Sussler sees no conflict of interest.

Self-promotion is anointed in oil and offered up as a civic virtue. For example, in the issue that ran concurrently with Ann McCoy's exhibition at Brooke Alexander, there appeared a half-page ad by the gallery *and* McCoy's four-page apologia for her own work. McCoy opened with majestic self-flattery—"Joseph Beuy's hare's blood works and my own work are but a few dealing with blood as subject in a complex, ritualized, multi-faceted and often pagan manner"—and closed with an equally self-serving call to conscience:

> If art is not to become a pawn of the marketplace, it must begin to embrace complex content, the totality of the organism. At the same time it must have a regard for its philosophical and historical foundations. *Artists must help create the new myth of the new epoch* [emphasis added]. Art must once again become serious business. It must be restored to its transformative and transcendent function.

This is the sort of oratorical platform from which the Third Reich launched its denunciation of "degenerate" art. Is the rhetoric or its intention any more palatable here because *Bomb* is politically correct and publishes a Rasta or a Sandinista poem?

Grandstanding in the arts ought to create more misgivings than it does. The lesson of this century has been brutally plain: art can be put to any purpose whatever. The decades intervening since Modernism was first formulated in the Café Odeons of pre-Stalinist Europe have validated Dadaist Tristan Tzara's maxim that the politics of art is a puny parody of the politics of power.

By now, avant-gardism is a safe, established category (*Bomb* illustrates a selection of Caribbean poetry with work by Roberto Juarez: a Dutch master drawing of a donkey Magic Markered into a donkey-headed penis rising from a hairy scrotum. Similar schoolboy stuffs are scrawled across a page of Mexican religious art. This has been regulation outré since Duchamp graffitied the Mona Lisa in 1919, titling it with a French code for "She's got a hot ass"). It is managed and neutralized by the same bureaucracies that fund it (*Bomb* carries the imprimatur of the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts). Like it or not, art is the least dangerous, least essential avenue of social engagement. The innovations of Gramm-Rudman are more radical than anything in the pages of *Bomb*. To pretend otherwise is intellectual dandyism at its most cynical.

Art *is* serious business. And that's O.K. Art's collusion with the marketplace restores to artists their own humanity. It permits them to be what they were all along—not priests or seers but skilled workers like any others, morally indistinguishable from their neighbors. What is *not* O.K. is the smug aura of high-mindedness, the vanguard posturing, of trendy media events like *Bomb* that want to have it both ways. □

WAKING TO THE RAIN

The night of my birthday
I woke from a dream
of harmony
suddenly hearing
an old man not my father
I said but it was
my father gasping
my name as he fell
on the stone steps outside
just under the window
in the rain
I do not know
how many times
he may have called
before I woke
I was lying
in my parents' room
in the empty house
both of them dead
that year
and the rain was falling
all around me
the only sound

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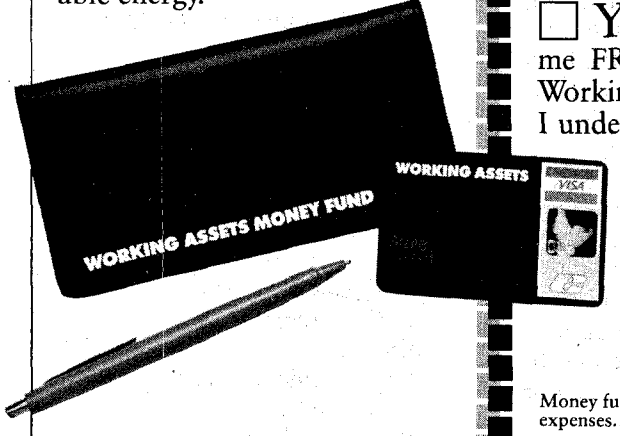

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Politics From A Different Position

PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST
Part IV — Does Mankind Have A Future?

Since the beginning of recorded history war has been the order of the day. Peace was only the interlude between wars. If not at one place on the globe, then at another. The organized killing of man by man always has existed. Sometimes the killings were of a minor nature, that is, involving only hundreds; at other times, thousands of killings took place. As civilization advanced and technology became more sophisticated the number of killings grew into the millions. The drive toward killing his fellow man seems to be man's perennial pursuit. And whenever he kills he always has a rationale for it. He feels right and justified in what he does.

Now that man has in his midst the ultimate instrument of destruction, the use of which would destroy this planet, there are those who believe that because of its powers to destroy, man will not use it. History does not support this belief. No matter how devastating the instruments of destruction that the technological mind has produced, from the saturation bomb, napalm, gas, chemicals, germs, man has used them on his fellow man. At the time these devices were produced there were those who said that because of the horrifying impact of these destructive tools, they would not be used. But they were. Those who thought that they would not be used based their belief on the assumption that when man kills he does so intellectually, that is, he uses logic and reason. What the believers fail to see is that when man kills it is not the intellect which functions. It is his emotions which take control. And emotions are not guided by logic and reason.

Concomitant with man's emotions there exists in his unconscious make-up a phantasmagoric conception generically known as the enemy. From infancy on, since the beginning of his development as a social being, man has been taught that to kill the enemy is a great deed. Who is the enemy? That varies from time to time, from institution to institution, and from society to society. In our own recent history Germany and Japan were our enemies and Russia and China were our friends. Now Russia and China are our enemies and Germany and Japan are our friends. The concept *enemy* is of course not limited to politics. It is by far more deeply ingrained universally in the unconscious of the individual person. In some form or another, in most people everywhere the universal friend is God and the universal enemy is the Devil. Thus the concept enemy is not a limited one, it is a deeply rooted complex configuration of overwhelming proportions that can consume not only the individual but whole nations.

From extensive studies in animal biology we have learned some startling facts. Animals seek to maintain a territorial imperative the way humans do. They will protect with whatever force they can command, even at the risk of their own lives, the domain they have established as their own. Thus the concept of one tiger to a hill and one male bird of a single species in a single hedge has reached the stage of folk knowledge. The evidence that animals, as if by instinct, pursue the establishment of a territorial imperative is impressive. And the conclusion must be that the drive for territoriality is biologic. Thus man's quest for identity through territory cannot be easily deflected. He, too, like the tiger, will kill to achieve his territorial integrity.

The way a person behaves individually is no measure of the way he will behave in a crowd. What he may not do individually he may do in a crowd, a mass, or a

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homogeneous group. A man as an individual may refuse to kill, but in a group of killers he will kill without compunction.

From our understanding of the psychodynamics of man's behavior we can now state with more certainty that in the Middle East the stage is set for World War III. The enemy is there. The territorial imperative is there. The mass movement is there. What is missing is a wider distribution of nuclear warheads. That will come in time.

Is there no balm in Gilead? Of course there is!

(To be continued)

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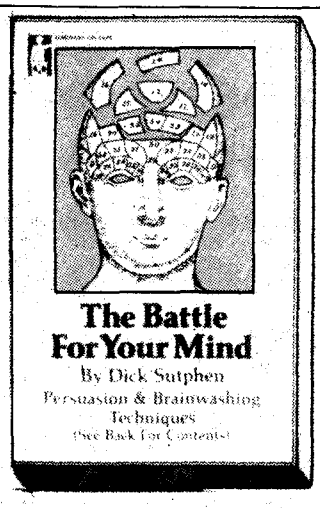

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I Do This, I Do That

TERRENCE RAFFERTY

TRANSACTIONS IN A FOREIGN CURRENCY. *By Deborah Eisenberg. Alfred A. Knopf. 214 pp. $15.95.*

The everyday philosophers who people Deborah Eisenberg's stories worry an awful lot about placing themselves in the world, finding the line where they stop and everyone else begins. For the socialite narrator of "Rafe's Coat," the unaccustomed act of sitting down to watch a soap opera produces this reflection: "All those other people seeing exactly the same thing as oneself, at the same time—one knew exactly where one was, somehow." In "What It Was Like, Seeing Chris," a 15-year-old girl who may be losing her sight steps out of her eye doctor's office onto the city streets on a summer day and, in the blinding presence of other people, thinks: "I realized that I wasn't really different from them anyhow—that every person just had one body or another, and some of them looked right and worked right and some of them didn't." In "Transactions in a Foreign Currency," a young woman left alone in a strange city by her sometime lover feels moved to ask the local butcher, "How would you describe the difference between the place you occupy in the world and the place I occupy?" He replies: "I'm standing over here, I see you standing over there, like that. . . . Got everything? Know where you are?" This sort of anxiety about identity certainly isn't anything new in modern fiction. What's original about Eisenberg's work is that her characters' anxiety is just part of the texture of the day, as ordinary an experience as walking down the street or buying some sausages or switching on the tube. The humor of her stories (and of her play, *Pastorale*, which was produced four years ago at New York's Second Stage) is in the casual tone of her people's meditations on, for example, the question, In what sense can one be said to have an existence independent of others? The narrators of the seven stories in *Transactions in a Foreign Currency* are all startlingly quick with such reflections, ready to examine a new thesis at the slightest, most mundane provocation. And Eisenberg doesn't structure her characters' little adventures in reality-testing in ways we're used to: these stories don't build to neat short-story epiphanies. In a world suddenly choked with young writers of short fiction, Eisenberg's identity is no problem; her dense, uneventful narratives aren't remotely like anyone else's.

Eisenberg's originality, though, carries some dangers along with it. All the stories in this collection—her first—are told in the first person, by women in very different situations, and each is something of a tour de force, an exercise in voice and limited perspective. Managing voices like these without the carefully engineered revelations that create "meaning" in conventional short fiction is a delicate, chancy business. Each of these stories has the strange effect of seeming luminously clear sentence by sentence, then elusive in the end—as if the smoke from all the crisp, explosive perceptions detonated along the way had finally clouded our view. The typical Eisenberg narrator drifts half-dazed through a series of encounters with the world, making tiny discoveries, pointless distinctions about her own feelings and over-subtle readings of others'. A slip in the story's tone could make any one of these women seem ponderous, obnoxiously self-absorbed; a slip in the other direction, and the narrator is just silly—a parody of sensitivity.

The neurotic diarist of "Days," for instance, having given up smoking and started to run at the local Y, comes up with some gems of introspection:

> I only fear that my impulses to run are a mistake, like my impulses, for instance, to sew, which, upon examination, invariably turn out to be impulses of some other kind—impulses, perhaps, to own a certain garment, or impulses to be *able* to sew, . . . or whatever, but not primary sewing impulses.

The story is a hilarious catalogue of such straight-faced *aperçus*, some with modest headings ("Monday," "The Locker Room," "Winter") and others with more grandiose ones ("I Risk Conscious Feelings of Desire,")—all in illustration of an ominous sounding opening thesis:

> I had never known what I was like until I stopped smoking, by which time there was hell to pay for it. When the haze cleared over the charred landscape, the person I had always as-

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sumed to be behind the smoke was revealed to be a tinny weights-and-balances apparatus, rapidly disassembling on contact with oxygen.

Eisenberg gets wonderful comic effects by imposing a mock-Dostoyevskian tone on this health-club saga, and she sustains the joke, with amazing energy and invention, for a good thirty pages. But it isn't quite satisfying. As funny as "Days" is, it may be a little too rigorous for its own good. All of Eisenberg's stories are imaginative workings-out of a particular kind of hypothesis—If I were *x*, I'd have to see the world this way—and while none of them is simply an exercise, a few, such as "Days" and "Rafe's Coat," don't come to much, like brilliant revue sketches that explore their premises from every angle and then, when all the variations have been exhausted, simply end.

"Days" and "Rafe's Coat" showcase Eisenberg's wit and her gift for mimicry: they're elegantly controlled representations of the furtive, darting maneuvers of undisciplined intelligences. There are much worse ways to be entertained. But in her best stories—"Flotsam," "What It Was Like, Seeing Chris" and "Transactions in a Foreign Currency"—Eisenberg seems to take her characteristic method of inspired ventriloquism combined with street epistemology a little further, into territory that reveals the beauty of her characters' confusion as well as its absurdity. The narrators of those stories have all been bounced into strange circumstances and forced to feel their way around in other people's lives. They're all, in fact, in the kind of situation parodied in the soap-opera-watching passages of "Rafe's Coat": "An office materialized, containing a devastatingly attractive silver-haired gentleman. Eric? Ellie's father? Stevie's stepfather? Aha! Not Ellie's father, because . . ."

Charlotte, the heroine of "Flotsam," moves into an East Village apartment after breaking up with her boyfriend in Buffalo, and her day-to-day attempts to interpret the language and habits of her new roommate and assorted others run parallel to her larger (and vaguer) efforts to figure out where her life is heading. The story works because all of its energy—Charlotte's and Eisenberg's—is focused on the immediate issue of deciding whether the roommate, Cinder, is a jerk or just a woman whose style is a touch unorthodox. The Big Questions don't rise to the surface very frequently; they bob up only occasionally and unpredictably, and sometimes get mixed up—by a process that's hilariously independent of the narrator's will—with the petty irritations of every day, the naggingly present stuff that Charlotte thinks of as flotsam. "Perhaps," she says, "what eventually appears to be information always appears at first to be just flotsam, meaningless fragments, until enough flotsam accretes to manifest, when one notices it, a construction."

That's probably the key sentence in Eisenberg's work, and that characteristic, tentative "perhaps" may be the key word. Her stories are designed not as perfect engines of meaning but as explorations, experiments in perception: sometimes her dense clusters of details will "manifest a construction"; sometimes they're just glitter on the surface, and there's no way, even for her, of predicting how they'll finally appear. The least successful story here, "Broken Glass," is in fact the most classically structured: there's even a revelation of sorts at the end. The best story, "What It Was Like, Seeing Chris," begins as if it might be no more than a stunt, a clever riff on the vigorous incoherence of the adolescent world view, but it keeps gathering emotional force, casually, among the jokes and offhand ironies.

The 15-year-old narrator's fear of losing her sight has, like Charlotte's anxieties about her future, an urgency that's mostly unspoken, and becomes, almost before we're aware of it, an especially lovely metaphor for a teenager's random, unstoppable hunger for experience—the conviction that if *this* thing, this moment's object of desire, is allowed to disappear, nothing like it will ever come in sight again. So the heroine flirts, briefly, with a 27-year-old guy named Chris, whom she knows nothing about, stores images for her mind's eye of an older lover and ends up looking at an aquarium in a grade-school classroom and thinking "how right that second there could be a man standing at a window overlooking a busy street, aiming a loaded revolver, but how it was just me, there, after Chris, staring at that turtle in the fourth-grade room and wondering if it would die before I stopped being able to see it." This ending, with its matter-of-fact jumble of impressions, its overdramatic, faintly comic fatalism and its surprising lyricism, is just perfect, and constructs a

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brilliant story in its wake. There's no telling, of course, where Eisenberg's explorations will lead her, but on the evidence of this exhilarating collection, she's already pretty far along—where others leave off, she begins. □

The Disappearing Act

STUART KLAWANS

TRAVELS IN HYPERREALITY: Essays. *By Umberto Eco. Translated by William Weaver. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 307 pp. $15.95.*

Publishers' notions of economic prudence guard our nation from foreign opinions more efficiently than even the McCarran-Walter Act. Were it not for the success of Umberto Eco's one novel, *The Name of the Rose* ("negligible," according to its author; "brilliant," according to five of the blurbs in the paperback edition; "rich," according to another seven), we could hardly expect to see this collection of Eco's journalism in our bookstores. His writings on semiotics, which he considers to be the main body of his work, aren't likely to turn a buck for anybody, and so remain in the safety of libraries.

The pieces collected here are Eco's off-the-cuff public reflections, most of them from the 1970s, a continuation of his academic work rather than an exception to it. "Travels in Hyperreality," the longest essay in the book and the one put up front presumably as most attractive to Americans, is an amused disquisition on certain tendencies in our mass culture. Another half-dozen articles report on the United States, or at least make extended reference to it. This, I think, is more than crafty editorial selection. Eco's scholarly career often draws him away from Bologna to New York, New Haven and Bloomington, Indiana; his semiotics has as its point of origin not so much Ferdinand de Saussure's Geneva as the Harvard of C.S. Peirce. Indeed, Eco goes so far as to boast in one of his essays that he was the first on his block to wear blue jeans. His opinions may not be so foreign after all—merely cosmopolitan.

That said, one must join Eco (who is writing explicitly for "cultivated," perhaps Americanized, Europeans and for "Europeanized Americans") and admit that the America he discovers is wondrous and strange indeed. Venturing out of the university towns, out of the big cities' islands of cosmopolitan culture, he finds that the real America is far from the land he once summarized as "the home of glass-and-steel skyscrapers and of abstract expressionism." "You have only to go beyond the Museum of Modern Art and the art galleries," he writes, "and you enter another universe, the preserve of the average family, the tourist, the politician." Here is an America "obsessed with realism," and with more than realism. It is the America of the Lyndon B. Johnson Memorial in Austin, Texas, of the Movieland Wax Museum in Buena Park, California, of Forest Lawn Cemetery and Ripley's Believe It or Not! museums, of William Randolph Hearst's San Simeon, of Santa Claus Village, Disneyland, Marine World and Oral Roberts's broadcasts.

Here America displays for itself its ideas of art, architecture, history, nature and religion in representations that "must be absolutely iconic, a perfect likeness, a 'real' copy of the reality being represented. . . . The American imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake." This is what Eco calls hyperreality—for example, the three-dimensional wax reproduction of Leonardo's *Last Supper*. (In his tireless researches, Eco visited no fewer than seven of these, and that was just on his way from San Francisco to Los Angeles.)

With a botanist's exactitude, Eco distinguishes the species of the hyperreal. Some specimens, like the L.B.J. Memorial, remind him of Superman's Fortress of Solitude at the North Pole: "Everything that has happened in his adventurous life is recorded here in perfect copies or preserved in a miniaturized form of the original." And just so, the L.B.J. Memorial displays *everything*, from honeymoon snapshots and a chunk of moon rock to a full-scale (and hyperreally immaculate) replica of the Oval Office. Then there are the Enchanted Castles, like San Simeon, where the visitor is distressed by "the fear of being caught up by this jungle of venerable beauties. . . . It is like making love in a confessional with a prostitute dressed in a prelate's liturgical robes reciting Baudelaire while ten electronic organs reproduce the Well-Tempered Clavier played by Scriabin."

Thus far a virtuoso performance—but not altogether a novel one, as connoisseurs of the American Godawful will realize. Evidence of hyperreality goes back at least a century and a half. Before considering Eco's conclusions, one might do well to review the experiences of another European visitor, the excellent Mrs. Frances Trollope.

In her invaluable *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, Mrs. Trollope detailed what the words "cultural activity" meant in Cincinnati of the 1820s: a visit to Joseph Dorfeuille's Western Museum, originally a natural history museum but less and less of one as time passed. Dorfeuille, wrote Trollope, was a man "of taste and science, but a collection formed strictly according to their dictates would by no means satisfy the western metropolis." The Americans "have a most extravagant passion for wax figures," and so Dorfeuille was reduced to "displaying specimens of this barbarous branch of art." The main attraction of his museum was a three-dimensional wax rendering not of *The Last Supper* but of Dante's hell, including "dwarfs that by machinery grow into giants before the eyes of the spectators; imps of ebony with eyes of flame; monstrous reptiles devouring youth and beauty; lakes of fire, and mountains of ice." What Mrs. Trollope neglects to tell the reader is that she herself had devised this masterpiece of hyperreality for Dorfeuille. Her plans for the Inferno were executed by the local sculptor Hiram Powers, who later (as if to complete the circle), emigrated to Europe, where he became one of the nineteenth century's idols of high art.

Now, I'm not dragging in Mrs. Trollope to embarrass Eco. Just the opposite. She was as reactionary, priggish and ignorant of the world of ideas as Eco is democratic, playful and erudite. Moreover, Eco, unlike Trollope, refuses merely to sneer at American hyperreality. He laughs—it would make a cow laugh, as Huck Finn put it—but he also admits that "our journey into the Absolute Fake" goes beyond "irony and sophisticated repulsion," and raises some difficult questions. Chief among them is, How can a society

Stuart Klawans, a novelist, lives in Manhattan but was born and raised in America.

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regain contact with the past?

It is greatly to Eco's credit that he poses the question. His answer, though, disappoints. He wants to avoid "second-hand Frankfurt school moralism," he says, and yet that's precisely what he delivers, concluding that hyperreality serves to make us all docile consumers. Well, sure. Nor is "Travels in Hyperreality" the only essay that proceeds from enticing observations to a somewhat banal climax. For all his learning and acuity, Eco often performs better as an entertainer than as an analyst.

What's missing from *Travels in Hyperreality* is reality itself—that is, ordinary, day-to-day reality. (In an era of semiotics and deconstruction, one uses the term with some shame, but how else to proceed?) Granted, any social critic working at a certain level of abstraction must gloss over mundane details, yet semiotics, I think, takes a special pleasure in making common reality disappear. The mundane shows up only for the sake of turning into the symbolic, and the symbolic soon goes up in a puff of smoke.

Eco is adept at such disappearing acts; in fact, they are one of his characteristic gestures. *The Name of the Rose* begins and ends with the disappearance of a manuscript. What's more (and I hope I'm not giving away too much of the plot) the solution of the tale's mystery comes about through the disappearance of the solution. This, as the old leftists said, is no accident. In the latest book, to take a trivial example, Eco argues that a sports-mad society, by piling commentary on top of reportage on top of obsessive viewing, arrives at the point where "sport as practice, as activity, no longer exists." And sport does vanish in Eco's term, yet I can assure the alarmed reader that Michael Jordan is out there all the same.

Similar dodges keep cropping up, most disturbingly in Eco's political essays. Many of them relate to the Red Brigades' actions, arguing quite skillfully and justly that the brigadiers behaved as if the political system were run by a top-hatted, pinkie-ringed man with a cigar in one hand and a bag of money in the other. There is, of course, a political system, Eco says, and it does operate according to a plan. But the plan "is no longer intentional, and therefore it cannot be criticized with the traditional criticism of intentions." Rather, one needs a model of power as a pervasive network of relationships, symbolic in character, living "thanks to thousands of forms of minute or 'molecular' consensus."

The image comes from Foucault. Eco develops it by distinguishing this internal, symbolic power from force, which is external and specific. But now comes the disappearing act. Once the idea of physical coercion has been spirited away from that of power, the relationship between them is left unexamined, so that it too might vanish by neglect. Might political activity itself—apart from the necessary and pleasant act of criticism—disappear as well?

The political act certainly does in another of the essays, "A Photograph." Eco describes how the appearance of a newspaper picture of a gunman changed the political atmosphere during a student uprising in 1977. Eco gives an excellent analysis of the photograph's effect on public opinion, explaining that we are "a civilization now accustomed to thinking in images," a civilization for which the photograph was less the depiction of a single event than an argument. But then he goes further, arguing

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that "it is of no interest to know if [the photograph] was posed (and therefore faked)." Certainly Eco would prefer it if that were the case, and who can dispute preferences? But as André Bazin, a cultural critic no less worthy than Eco, once explained, the crucial psychological factor in all photography is its mechanical, objective rendering of fact. Our trust in the reality of photographs is highly problematic, but it is far from groundless. In short, the photograph Eco discusses could function as an argument only because people did care about its truthfulness.

Whatever the strategy of each essay, common reality always seems a little slippery in Eco's writing. This is one charge that cannot be made against Mrs. Trollope. Her account of the Western Museum comes after a description of Cincinnati's market and the means by which townspeople kept milk cows. By contrast, Eco's visit to hyperreality follows various Houdini turns and is followed by still more. They're entertaining, granted; but that's a sign of Eco's complicity, his participation in designing his own wax museum Inferno. In his travels, Eco often came upon certificates by so-called European authorities attesting that the fakes on view were authentic copies. In his essay on hyperreality, Eco serves a similar function. The cosmopolitan reader feels free to laugh precisely because Eco's unimpeachable academic rigor guarantees that the laughter is sanctioned.

But who's the joke on? We can't know unless we've also visited the American reality from which the hyperreal is an escape. I recall a weekend in Chester, Illinois—a noncosmopolitan place, believe me—where I'd gone to help raise funds for the construction of a monumental bronze statue of Popeye the Sailor. (Again we touch upon the hyperreal.) Elzie Segar, Popeye's creator, was the most celebrated native of Chester, a town that today has two main businesses. On one side of town is a Federal penitentiary; on the other, a state mental hospital. On Saturday night, Chester's teen-agers drive endlessly up and back on the main drag, going quite literally from madhouse to prison. I stood on a motel balcony with my old friend Jack, who once did three years in Joliet for armed robbery, and watched the cars pass. "It's like the joint," Jack kept saying. "It's just like the joint."

Some joke. □

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Seeds of Empire

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

THE CHARACTER FACTORY: Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts and the Imperatives of Empire. *By Michael Rosenthal. Pantheon. 335 pp. $22.95.*

The anxieties and preoccupations of the imperial nation into which Lord Baden-Powell introduced the Boy Scout movement some seventy-five years ago have a familiar look to them. Prominent citizens bewailed something it would be fair to call post-Boer War syndrome, variously defined as a lack of national resolve, declining military ardor, physical degeneration of the island race, reluctance to face global responsibilities, shortfall in spunk, pluck and kindred vitamins. The Japanese were keenly admired. "If we look at the causes of Japan's success," wrote Baden-Powell in December 1904, "we find it very largely in the soldierly spirit and self-sacrificing patriotism of the whole of the people." Easily as great as admiration of the Japanese example was gloom at Britain's own lack of military preparedness, supposedly caused by the lack of a universal draft and by the machinations of the pacifist, white-feather crowd. Invasion scenarios, dismissed by Winston Churchill as being "confined to the inmates of Bedlam and writers for the *National Review*," poured off the presses and were neatly parodied by young P.G. Wodehouse in *The Swoop*, published in 1909:

> Not only had the Germans effected a landing in Essex, but, in addition, no fewer than eight other hostile armies had, by some remarkable coincidence, hit on that identical moment for launching their long-prepared blow. England was not merely beneath the heel of the invader. It was beneath the heels of nine invaders. There was barely standing room.

For every outcrop of today's blend of malaise-mongering and profit-through-panic, one can find a parallel in those agitated times. The producers of ABC's forthcoming *Amerika* (a Commies-are-here fantasy) should study William Le Queux's best seller of 1906, *The Invasion of 1910*, serialized by the *Daily Mail*, whose proprietor had the sound judgment to insist that Le Queux alter the route of the invading Huns so that they would pass through areas where his newspapers enjoyed a high circulation. For every Podhoretz lamenting moral decline and the pullulation of homosexuals in the State Department, there was a Buchan similarly keening over Albion's accelerating moral turpitude; for every Vidal shouting for a U.S.-Soviet entente against the yellows, there is a premonitory echo, as from the National Council of Public Morals, which announced, "It behoves the white races to end their differences and to unite in establishing durable civilizations."

Protectionists complained that the very body of John Bull had been infiltrated by alien matter. "The flour for his bread is probably American, his eggs are possibly French, . . . beef from Argentina pasturage. . . . There is little British in his composition in a physical sense," wrote James Cantlie in 1900. Sidney Webb worried that the most prolific breeders were coming from the wrong end of the social spectrum, that the country would "gradually" (Webb, after all, was one of the founding Fabians) fall to the Irish and the Jews and that "the ultimate future of these islands may be to the Chinese."

Then, as now, the analysis and the conclusions were absurd. The fundamental problem was domestic economic stagnation, induced by a class structure that constricted the development of adequate internal markets. At the time Le Queux was fearfully prophesying German rampages in the home counties, the chances of a British working-class boy getting to university were about one in a million, a statistic of considerably more moment to the decline of empire than the ingestion of alien foodstuffs.

Of the innumerable members of this Edwardian preview of the Committee on the Present Danger it is hard to imagine anyone more paradigmatic than Robert Baden-Powell. Despite Michael Rosenthal's excellent and unsparing portrait of his personality, his obsessions and the national preoccupations from which they derived, Baden-Powell—or B.P. as he liked to be called—will no doubt survive in collective memory as the kindly, generous figure in the legend he so zealously fostered. Certainly when I was a Wolf Cub at a preparatory school near Ascot in the early 1950s he was constantly invoked as role model by Patsy Warner, the amiable wife of our headmaster. She would deploy us round her in a circle beneath a chestnut tree and tell us of B.P.'s exploits on the veld, his woodcraft, his jousts with the obstreperous Boers; and I listened with a pleasure terminated only when the use of bad language caused me to be stripped of my green jersey and expelled forever from the magic circle.

A big moment in the popular fiction of Baden-Powell's contemporaries such as John Buchan or "Sapper," was the occasion of unmasking. Before the startled gaze of the hero the kindly features of the parson or retired army major would suddenly recompose into the lineaments of villainy, whether of the man who hooded his eyes like a hawk in *Thirty-Nine Steps* or of the Absolute Evil of the dying Carl Peterson in *The Final Round*, so physically repugnant that "what that face truly was no man can ever tell." The same sort of thing happens in *The Character Factory*. Just as down the decades many a Scout has discovered that the ardent gaze and intrusive hands of his Scoutmaster portended more than innocent zeal to convey the rudiments of woodcraft, so too, in Rosenthal's account, does the hearty mien of B.P.—or Grey Wolf, as he also liked to be known—dissolve into a pathology of racism, militarism and sexual repression.

Until the lifting of the siege of Mafeking, on May 17, 1900, at which point he became a national hero, there was no indication that Baden-Powell would be more than a typical officer of empire. His father died when he was 3 months old, and from his earliest years his mother, struggling to raise seven children on sparse means, taught him the importance of "grouping," her word for what would now be called networking, whereby Baden-Powell toadied to his superiors and spent long and anxious hours pondering how to turn every circumstance to his own advantage. Few saw through him, though Angus Hamilton of *The Times* once invoked "the steel manacles of his ambition, which had checkmated the emotions of the man in the instincts of the officer."

His army service in India was distinguished chiefly by his passion for pig-sticking, on which he wrote an authoritative treatise. With that characteristic British talent for rationalizing a victim's agonies as being somehow for his own good, Baden-Powell said that the pig, at

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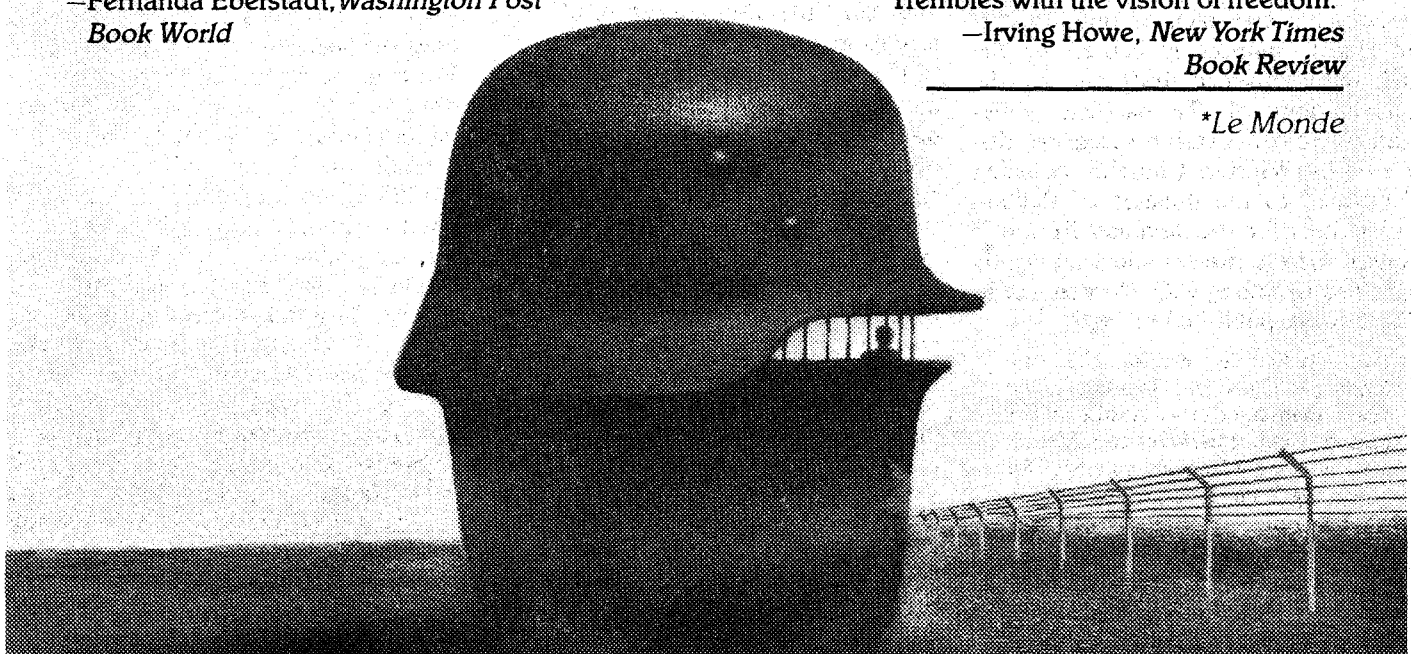

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least until it got terminally stuck, had a good time too. Thus far B.P. was an entirely conventional case of arrested mental and emotional development. Mafeking was his breakthrough, the apotheosis of a demented school prefect. Managing to be comfortably besieged for 217 days by a Boer force only slightly superior to his own, he became a symbol of valor for a nation humiliated by the dour resistance of a few thousand Dutchmen. The care with which B.P. attended to what he regarded as his prime military duty—the preparation of modestly vainglorious communiqués for domestic consumption—is reminiscent of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, another chill self-promoter. The more journalists found out about MacArthur, the less they liked him, and the same was true for B.P. Newsmen in Mafeking soon noted that there was little risk from the besieging enemy, whose passions had been most deeply aroused by B.P.'s impiety in playing polo on Sunday. They also noted that in order to assure the material comforts of the white inhabitants of Mafeking, B.P. was systematically starving to death the several thousand Africans in the town.

As befits one of the greatest of the great communicators (Rosenthal reckons him to be the best-selling British author in history, after Shakespeare), B.P. learned and remembered the promotional values of Mafeking. He expressed them with appropriate cynicism to some journalists, in the course of a few tips about self-advancement based on his own experiences as a correspondent:

> I thought it the sure road to success to strike out a new and original line for myself, and found—I was quite wrong. That instead of taking my powers to be original my business was to write what, at the moment, the public wanted to believe.

The public wanted a victory, which B.P. supplied them from the squalid realities of a militarily unimportant siege. The public, as B.P. brilliantly sensed, also needed reassurance about the "youth problem," a vast reserve army of juvenile discontent—pimply, thriftless, physically unfit for war, insufficiently respectful of authority and the imperatives of empire, potentially seditious.

B.P. brought to his self-appointed career as youth organizer some essential attributes. His verbal and syntactic data base was uncannily apt for his role, a bluff lexicographic universe peopled with chaps and bricks ("If you are discontented with your place or with your neighbours or if you are a rotten brick, you are not good to the wall. . . . Some bricks may be high up and others low down in the wall; but all must make the best of it") and straight talk and manliness and short sentences administered with avuncular good cheer. He knew the virtues of absolute and continued self-assurance, of being decent to the other fellow, of giving a firm handshake and looking someone straight in the eye. B.P. brought to perfection the art of homespun, jovial demagogy, in which the very candor of expression carried his audience pleasantly through such reflections as:

> The worst part of slavery is, as a rule, the hardships entailed in the slave-caravan marches, which have to be conducted at a forced pace over desert and devious routes, in order to avoid the good intentions of the European anti-slavery forces.

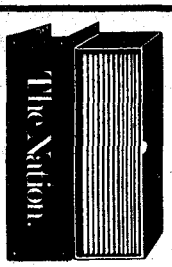
One can imagine Ronald Reagan reading out this passage with great conviction, allowing a friendly, chuckling pause at the words "good intentions."

Another important quality was his sure instinct for plagiarism. B.P.'s intention in founding the Boy Scouts was simplicity itself. He wanted to found, as he put it, a Society for the Propagation of Moral Attributes, the attributes in question being primarily obedience. Seeking to add allurement to his design, he brazenly stole the woodcraft system of Ernest Thompson Seton, an English artist and naturalist living in the United States, and when Seton wrote furiously to complain—as he did for many years—B.P. gave him an epistolary clap on the back and thanked him for being so awfully decent about the whole thing.

To the gifts of demagogy and plagiarism B.P. added a keen political sense of alliances. The usefulness of a movement inculcating patriotism and obedience did not escape the generals, politicians and newspaper proprietors who backed Baden-Powell to the hilt, aware that B.P. always had the adroitness to share their agenda while preserving the fiction that Scouting's chief injunction, "Be Prepared," had nothing to do with war.

B.P.'s ideal Scout was prepared for war, prepared to defend empire and, literally, propagate it. An ardent admirer of the eugenicists, B.P. shared their concern about the adulteration of national blood lines by coarse genetic material. This concern prompted, at least in part, an obsession with the perils of masturbation. He was strongly against the practice, urging cold baths and exercise of "the upper half" of the body as antidote. One unpublished draft unearthed by Rosenthal stated flatly that the result of self-abuse "is always—mind you, always—that the boy after a time becomes weak and nervous and shy, he gets headaches, . . . and if he still carries it on too far he very often goes out of his mind and becomes an idiot." B.P. plainly felt that each unproductive emission from a public-school lad meant a loss of sound ruling-class stock. Although he couldn't publicly advocate a class-based policy on wanking, there is evidence that he would not have been unduly upset by lower-class lads spilling their seed on the ground. He didn't want them to breed at all, and spoke fondly of bees, who had the good sense to "kill their unemployed."

When it came to sex, B.P.'s imaginative landscape was surrealist in contour. His volumes of instruction are



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thickly populated with sudden fires, runaway horses, oncoming trains, drowning women and venomous snakes. According to Rosenthal, the "most intense relationship of his life" was with an officer named Kenneth McLaren, nicknamed, on account of his youthful good looks, "the boy." It's not known whether actual beastliness occurred. B.P. was married very late, long past what he called "the dangerous rutting period," to Olave Soames, whom he described to his mother as "the cheeriest girl possible," with the added virtue of an income of £1,000 a year from her father.

Far more sinister—because more plausible—than Sir Oswald Mosley, B.P. was the *echt* British fascist, from the crest of his Scout hat to the soles of his sensible brogues. He hated "niggers," Jews and trade unions with a zeal matched only by his enthusiasm for Mussolini and the Hitler Jugend, which he considered emblematic of the finest ideals of Scouting. When a certain Herr Riecke, a German youth leader trying to form an alternative to the Hitler Jugend, was sent to a concentration camp, B.P. rallied to the Nazis' defense, saying that Riecke had been sent there "not for international tendencies, but for homosexual tendencies!"

Following B.P.'s career forward from World War I, where his instilled qualities of obedience, reverence for authority and associated family values helped account for the death of millions, we can see all the necessary attributes of British-style Nazism, simultaneously expressed by the brutish figure of Bulldog Drummond and his "Black Gang" in Sapper's books. Having won the war, Britain could export this fascism to the colonies, where Scouting's traditions were boldly exercised until the end. The final joke on B.P. was that the surviving spirit of Scouting is the more pacific woodcraft element he stole from Seton. This would not have bothered B.P. too much. Born again in the United States today, he would, I imagine, soon be forming alliances with the survivalists, General Singlaub, Secretary of Education Bennett, Nancy Reagan and the other great communicator, and working hard for national regeneration. □

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ART.

ARTHUR C. DANTO

Alex Katz

The philosopher Alvin Goldman once invented the following puzzle. Jones (who else?) is driving through a landscape dotted with what he has every reason to believe are barns but that in fact are large, flat pieces of plywood shaped and painted to look like barns. There is one real barn among them, and as he passes it Jones believes he is passing a barn, as indeed he is. He had the same belief as he passed the barn facsimiles, and he will have the same belief again as he passes facsimiles to come. On this occasion the belief is true, but would we say that Jones *knows* that he is passing a barn, since his basis for so believing is the same as it would have been had the belief been false?

I felt as if I were wandering through Goldman's epistemological farmland on the fourth floor of the Whitney Museum, much of which is occupied (until June 15) by Alex Katz's cutouts: free-standing flat effigies of members of Katz's family and various friends from the art world: Sanford Schwartz, Rudy Burckhardt, Frank O'Hara. To be sure, it was not the hallucinatory experience visitors would sustain at a show of Duane Hanson's vivid, lifelike figures, got up to look like visitors to the Whitney. Seeing a crowd of Hanson's figures standing before less mischievous paintings and sculptures, one might believe one was not alone in the gallery. Would one *know* one was not alone when in fact one was not alone? Katz's figures are not in the least intended to fool the eye. They are, in the first instance, unmistakably painted. And they are, secondly, not life-size. In fact they stand to their living models in much the same ratio as our mirror images stand to ourselves—namely, as readers of Gombrich know and as anyone can verify by measuring his or her image in the bathroom mirror, half-size. It is well known that the cutouts came from paintings that did not work out for Katz; he simply detached the image from the background and gave it an identity of its own. The relationship of an image on the surface of the painting to its model may be very like the relationship between one's mirror image and oneself, and that may ac-

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count for the slightly disconcerting feeling one gets from the cutouts, which seem oddly shrunken. It would be quite disconcerting to see a space filled with mirror images were it possible to liberate them from mirrors and stand them on their own. It would be almost surreal, like seeing someone unpack a box of shadows and spread them around the room. The cutout is insistently an image, and its flatness underscores the fact that it is not to be taken for something else.

The cutout is Alex Katz's most distinctive contribution to contemporary art. The cutouts are not paper dolls for sophisticates, though they stand in fashionable corners of the art world, where the Katz cutout has the cachet once carried by the instantly recognizable Calder mobile (which was also not a toy for sophisticates). The cutout so resembles the figure in a painting by Katz that one could will the problem of determining whether a given painting was of a woman or of a cutout of a woman, for the figures in the paintings have a curious flatness. The answer, I think, is that Katz is engaged in making images and that it is a mistake to look at a painting as anything other than a flat surface with some as yet unliberated images taking up part of that surface. The images have to look like something; they would not be images if they did not. But an image is the kind of entity that exhausts its essence by being pure surface. The cutouts are like the two-dimensional beings of a fictional Flatland, who live their lives in Euclidean planes. They enable us to realize that the paintings, too, are meant to be understood as surfaces. "My theory," Katz stated in a recent interview with Grace Glueck, "is if you get the surfaces right, you get everything else right." *My* theory is that whatever else there is in Katz's work is to be defined in terms of surface.

At a certain moment in the history of recent painting, flatness, which one might have supposed could be taken for granted, seemed an almost impossible goal. Its being a goal was connected with the struggle against illusion, in which abstraction was a strategy. The problem with abstraction is that the moment one makes a mark on the canvas, it seems immediately to assume a position in an illusory, pictorial space. Another mark will be seen as behind it or in front of it or even in the same plane with it, but neither of them seems ready to stay on the surface. What is the point of abstraction when pictorial space seems irremediably illusory? If flatness could be achieved, the painter would no longer be engaged in representing reality but in creating it. But what if flatness cannot be achieved? By cutting his figures out of the picture plane and releasing them into our space, where they nevertheless are not sculpture but painting, Katz made their planar essence palpable. Because they are creatures of the surface, they carry their atmosphere with them, like astronauts on the moon. They cannot exist outside the plane, hence the paintings they belong to are absolute surface. Q.E.D.

Let me bring this out in another way. In one of his paintings, Katz shows a painting that is itself a painting by Alex Katz. It is a mark of this artist's style that it is difficult to imagine a painting *in* a painting by him that is not itself a painting *by* him—as though Alex Katz could paint only Alex Katzes. I know of few painters limited in this way by their own vision of art. Eric Fischl, who has a show on the Whitney's second floor, once exhibited a painting of a child in an interior that included an unmistakable work of Andy Warhol's. Like the child, like the furnishings, the Warhol was ex-

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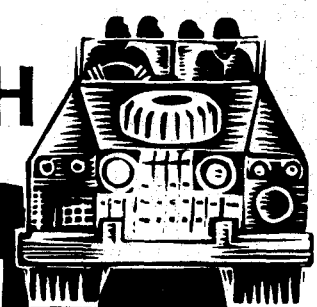

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ecuted in Fischl's marvelously brushy way. It was a painting of a Warhol by Fischl; still, the painting was Warhol and not Fischl, and one did not believe that Warhol painted in Fischl's marvelously brushy way any more than one believed the child was made of brushstrokes, or of anything save flesh and blood. In *Gersaint's Shopsign*, Watteau painted the interior of an art gallery. Any square inch of a Watteau has that artist's distinctive touch, whether it shows a woman's face or a portrait of a king's face. Still, the gallery does not look as though it contains only Watteaus, and in fact I do not believe it contains any. Paintings of paintings, accordingly, raise fascinating questions of pictorial perception, but a painting of a painting by Katz would almost certainly look like a painting by Katz of a painting by Katz. This is because the paintings in his paintings belong, as everything else in the paintings belongs, to the surface—as essential flatnesses. The paintings at the Whitney could in many cases be cutouts of paintings. They would demonstrate their flatness in just the way the irregular cutouts do, having their edges coincide with the edges of their subjects.

Alex Katz is a survivor of the art wars that raged in the teapot art world of the 1950s. He is of the generation that took abstraction as a credo and the image as a heresy. A credo is not an option but an imperative, and to resist such an imperative took great courage and great confidence. What strikes me in this retrospective is that Katz is finally one of the most abstract artists of his period, that in a way he solved the problem of abstraction through the use of images, chiefly by taking away from his figures any reality except what pertains to their status as images. If there were an interior space shown by his works it would be an interior occupied by flat things—by cutouts, in effect—as a stage would be an interior space filled by flat pieces of scenery. So figuration in his case is a means to abstract ends. In the earliest paintings shown, there is often a figure, small in relation to the background, that is often just blank paint, as though Katz had not decided what to do with it. It was as if the figure were waiting to be cut out of this blankness, like a paper doll on a page. When they are cut out it becomes perfectly plain that there is no more to them than meets the eye. They are what they seem. They are seemings. There are no hidden depths because there are no depths. The artist has flung back into the teeth of a famous indictment of Plato his own credo: "Appearance be my reality!"

As pure looks, one expects from the cutouts no more emotion than paper dolls themselves have, or masks. There are no moral depths hinted at by painted eyes when we take them as painted eyes. The faces are arrestingly bland. So there is little to do with them except place them in juxtaposition, or paint clothes on their bodies. The same woman (Katz's wife, as we have been told) is shown with a wardrobe as rich as Barbie's—red coats and rain hats, snow bonnets, kerchiefs, cocktail frocks—doing little more than just being there, posed and placed, filling the maximally thin space between the front and back of the surface. It is a world in which the only problems are artistic problems, problems of scale and shape. The portraits of Katz's wife, of which there are said to be over one hundred, reveal nothing about her except her generalized look. They would not, side by side, give us a record of a character, as Rembrandt's self-portraits would. Katz's subjects have been transfigured out of life into

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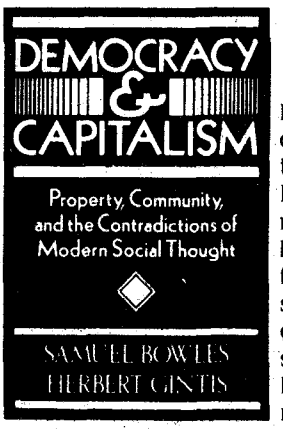
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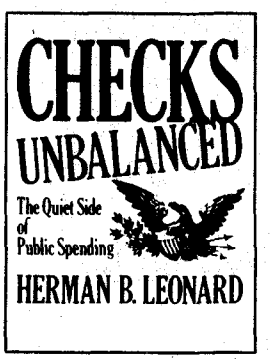

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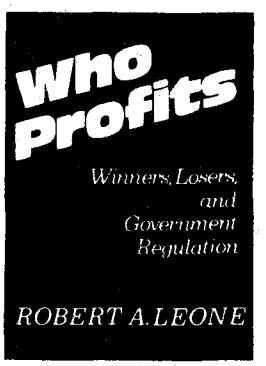

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art. They are like the golden birds in the Byzantine throne room, lifted out of nature. He is not a representational artist at all.

Katz's failures arise only when he forsakes his abstract humans for things not so easily purged of substantiality—a moose, for example, so badly painted that it looks like the Macy's balloon of Bullwinkle folded around itself; or an atrocious gigantic dog (*Sunny*), which I wanted to turn to the wall; or an ill-advised tree. *Swamp Maple, 4:30*, as the painting of that tree is titled, has begun to crackle, though done only in 1968. Crackling paint is a reminder of a reality these images are designed to flee, and an artist who is bent on celebrating surface ought to handle paint with a greater concern for its chemical treacheries. I was unhappy with some very big flowers, simply because they immediately turned into a floral pattern, making the painting look like expensive wallpaper. In wallpaper, the assumption of surface is instantly granted, and the solution is somehow too easy. What, finally, are best are the wonderful large heads: a woman under an umbrella, with flat raindrops falling in the surface, or wearing a winter hat in snow, or a smashing red coat and hat. My sense is that Katz has paid a certain price for his extreme reductions, which have left his images severely limited to themselves. They are like subjects without predicates, simply there, simply shown, take them or leave them. It is an agreeable art, but not a stirring one. □

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A	■	W	■	N	■	A	■	G	■	S	■	R	■	S
T	H	E	A	T	E	R	■	A	R	C	H	A	I	C
H	■	E	■	H	■	A	■	M	■	A	■	N	■	A
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M	■	M	■	A	■	■	■	■	■	L	■	U	■	V
■	R	E	S	T	R	O	O	M	■	B	A	R	G	E
S	■	R	■	■	■	R	■	A	■	A	■	■	■	L
C	H	I	L	D	C	A	R	E	■	C	A	C	A	O
A	■	C	■	O	■	N	■	S	■	O	■	A	■	C
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E	■	N	■	N	■	E	■	R	■	E	■	R	■	T
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Crossword Puzzle No. 2102

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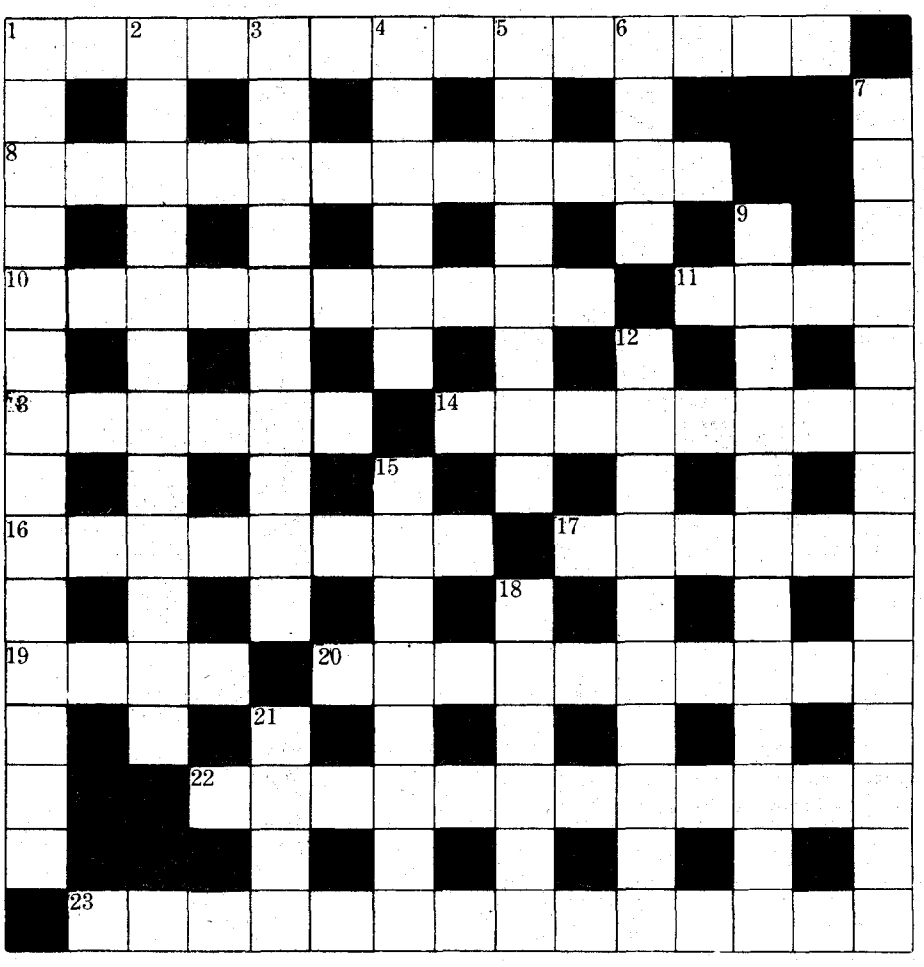

ACROSS

1 One really isn't in control of the gas supply, but may sound the alarm of anticipated danger. (4-4,6)
8 They just don't seem to be able to make bouillon! (3,4,5)
10 Look at Attic salt, as they say, where the monster is supposed to be the all-seeing one. (10)
11 Nothing but pine, extending for a considerable distance . . . (4)
13 . . . guaranteeing a good supply of oak later, and grain in like circumstances. . . (6)
14 . . . which is rather rare, being not at all like a place in Boston. (8)
16 Foreign, in a sense, like the next real difficulty encountered. (8)
17 It may be only close, if you're considering shoes, but that's what the stout person hopes to get, perhaps. (6)
19 Formerly found cone-shaped. (4)
20 When it was rolled out did it make the barber reel? (4,6)
22 Get lost, as an alternative? (2,3,4,3)
23 Is the graduate looking forward—if he wants a great big diploma for framing? Well, mainly! (2,1,5,6)

DOWN

1 Correspondingly, the stiles can't be worked more than once this way, until the collection is made. (2,3,4,5)
2 A large number get separated this way—despite proximity. (5,7)
3 As to it, possibly, not a single thing commonly gets added, when it's fixed. (10)
4 All but the head of the canyon takes one direction—it follows tennis, as they say. (6)
5 Similar to what Homer could have occasionally been doing, when a brief remark comes up, as one might confess. (8)
6 Skin eruption, possibly due to certain colored materials. (4)
7 Many a military dictatorship might have so served—a bad example, but a usual one. (2,1,7,4)
9 "Now I lay me down to sleep" is one—but certain people make book of it. (6,6)
12 A word of warning to Windsor, perhaps—that's where the crew hangs out! (10)
15 An auto needs an Edsel front end—Ford-built—and obviously well maintained. (5,3)
18 Following what's beneath an A category, it could be worse! (To do so, you don't need to read anything carefully.) (6)
21 As a preliminary to further speech, we will get better in the spring! (4)

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